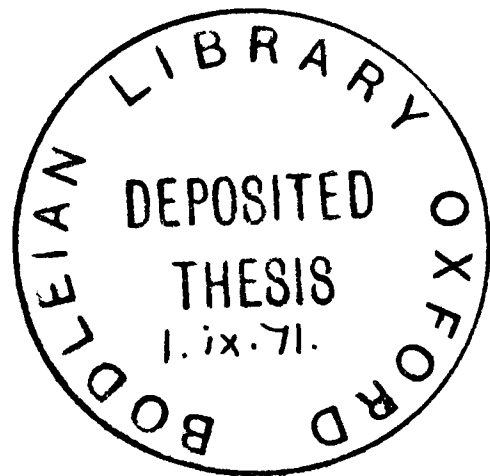
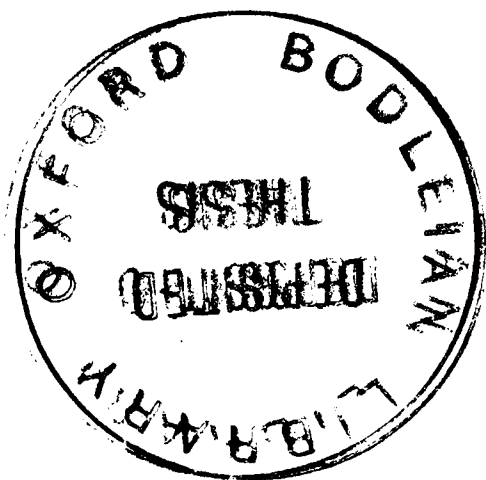


A Critical Examination of the Notion of 'Policy Sciences'

A thesis submitted for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree at Oxford University

by

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Abstract

The basic aim of this thesis is to attack on logical grounds the doctrine that there can be a policy science which, through the objective application of the laws of social science, will be able to scientifically solve a great many of the political problems of modern society.

First, however, there is a long Historical Review (Part I) which traces the development of this doctrine in the history of social science, hoping to reveal thereby both its deeper assumptions as well as its connections with social science itself. After a brief Introduction (chapter 1), which explains the reasons for the Historical Review (1.1) and its organization (1.2), and which tries to indicate in a prefatory way the political implications of the idea of an ethically neutral social science (1.3), Part I is divided into two major sections, the Empiricist Tradition (chapter 2) and the Weberian Tradition (chapter 3). In both of these chapters I attempt to draw a connection between each Tradition's conception of science, its related ideas concerning social science, the particular methodological prescriptions of some of its more important thinkers, its ideas about the role values must play in the new science, and finally its political implications.

The key figure in the Empiricist Tradition is Saint Simon; he is discussed in section 2.2. This section relates his desire for a 'social physiology' both to his understanding of the social problems of the day (the chaos wrought by fundamental economic changes, and the need for order based on rational solutions to political and social problems) and to the intellectual requirements of the time (the Law of the Three Stages). Section 2.3 continues with his direct successor, Auguste Comte; his work is discussed in broadly the same terms, except that his methodological remarks regarding social science are more emphasized. Section 2.4 begins with a discussion of John Stuart Mill, who is important for this thesis by introducing the distinction between facts and values and relating it to the distinction between ends and means;

in so doing he profoundly alters the political role which the future policy scientist will play, deflating it from that of a saviour to that of an engineer. This section ends with a few brief remarks on Modern Empiricism. Section 2.5 is also a continuation of a line of thought begun in Comte, his remarks on Functionalism. Here the most important figure is Emile Durkheim (2.5.1); Durkheim's methodological analyses are directly related to his ideas about values and also to his opinions regarding the role social science ought to play in political life. This section ends with a few brief remarks on Modern Functionalism (2.5.2): first by demonstrating how the modern functionalist meets the argument that his method betrays a conservative bias, and thus is not value-free; and secondly, by introducing into Durkheim's thought the distinction between facts and values, thereby bringing it into line with modern conceptions.

The Weberian Tradition (chapter 3) opens with a discussion of the hypethetico-deductive conception of science and relates this conception to the Weberian concentration on human action (section 3.1). Max Weber is discussed in section 3.2. Here I begin with a discussion of his remarks regarding the relationship of social science to politics through an understanding of his remarks on facts and values; these remarks rest, in turn, on his conception of social science being value free, and they therefore lead forward to a consideration of his views on this question. In order to understand these views, however, it is necessary to analyze first the logical peculiarities which he assigns to social science, and only then to see how -- basically by drawing a distinction between value-reference and value-freedom -- despite these peculiarities the social sciences can be objective. This chapter ends with a note on the Modern Weberians, listing many examples, briefly singling out Myrdal and Mannheim, and relating this tradition to an 'ally' in the United States, the pragmatism of American social science.

In order to fulfill my ambition of also uncovering the assumptions

about man and society contained in the notion of a policy science, it was necessary in chapter 2 to discuss some of the forerunners of social science, and since this chapter's pivotal figure was Saint Simon, I confined my remarks to those thinkers who influenced him most deeply: Francis Bacon, Fontenelle, the Abbe Saint Pierre, Condillac, Montesquieu, the Ideologues and Turgot very briefly, and finally Condorcet. There (2.1) I was interested in showing how each of these theorists contributed some important idea to the developing conception of, and hopes for, a social science which would do for men in society what the physical sciences were doing for man's relations with nature. This ambition of uncovering the basic pre-suppositions of the notion of a policy science continues throughout the rest of chapter 2 and chapter 3, in which particular social scientists are analyzed at greater length, but in a more indirect and implicit way. It is only in chapter 4 that this aspect again comes to the fore; in this chapter (entitled "The Doctrine of Ethical Neutrality and Technological Society: the Ideology of Social Science"), I attempt to draw the Historical Review to a close by bringing together the separate strands of all the thinkers into a coherent picture of the aspirations for, and the nature of, a policy science which will in some senses rationalize the social affairs of man by eliminating a large area of politics. In all of this I am much concerned with the assumptions implicit in the belief in a policy science because, by criticizing this belief, I also hope to thereby undermine what I call, throughout this thesis, the technological approach to man's social affairs.

Part II, the Analytic Critique, is an attempt to refute, on logical grounds, the basic elements which comprise the notion of a policy science. Broadly speaking, I attack the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences (chapters 5 and 6); I attempt to rebut the idea that political policy, even that designed as a means to an end, can be decided on solely technical grounds (chapter 7); and finally, I critically examine

the whole notion of replacing politics with some sort of science, and try to elucidate some of its political ramifications (chapter 8).

Chapters 5 and 6 go together, for their purpose is to show the logical impossibility of a social science being value-free, chapter 5 arguing that there can be no description of social action which does not in part reflect the moral stance of the describer, chapter 6 claiming that there can be no explanation of social action which does not in part depend on the explainer's moral views towards his fellow men and which is not meaningless apart from these views.

Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of the need for what I call action and group concepts in the description of human social behaviour; the rest of the chapter is taken up with arguing that these types of concepts are necessarily value-laden. By value-laden is meant two distinct things: first, that whether or not these concepts apply cannot be decided by reference merely to external facts without reference to rules and purposes; and second, that their use implies a value stance towards the agent(s) one is describing by means of them, by which is meant that one establishes standards in terms of which the worth of the act must be judged, as well as that one creates a set of expectations which, in the absence of counter-vailing moral considerations, would force one to a particular moral judgement. The arguments supporting these contentions are developed slowly, analyzing each of the two separate categories of action concepts (5.1), conventional action concepts (5.1.1), which are those descriptive terms which invoke social rules, and intentional action concepts (5.1.2), which are those descriptive terms which connote some purpose on the part of the actors; finally, I then turn to group concepts (5.2), by which is meant those terms used to refer to any collection of persons distinct from others because they are socially related in certain ways, and to which these individuals belong as members. The chapter ends with a general summing-up under the title 'Description and Social Action' (5.3), although there is some new

material, in the form of some general remarks on the nature of description in general, at the beginning of 5.3.1. Generally, section 5.3.1 attempts to show how social action concepts are what I have been calling 'subjective', and section 5.3.2 attempts to show how they are not morally neutral. The conclusion of this chapter is that the very subject matter which the social scientist marks out for study already includes valuational elements, and that therefore a social science cannot serve as the objective foundation for an ethically neutral policy science.

Chapter 6 consists of a detailed examination of the three sorts of explanation which I discussed in Part I, namely, verstehen explanation (6.1), causal explanation (6.2), and functional explanation (6.3). In each section the object is the same: to demonstrate that there can be no explanation of social action which does not in part depend on the explainer's interests, purposes and values, and that, as such, they cannot serve as the basis for a policy science. Section 6.1 proceeds with an examination of verstehen explanations only after the role they play in social science has been analyzed (6.1.1); here it is argued that the widespread tendency to dismiss such explanations is misconceived, both because it is based on a misunderstanding of concepts of mind, and because it fails to appreciate the connection between action descriptions and verstehen explanations. Section 6.1.2 attempts to reveal the logic of this form of explanation, first negatively, by arguing that a dispositional account of them is wrong, and only then positively, by showing that they provide the rationale of actions. Understood in this way, it is then shown (section 6.1.3) that verstehen explanations are a form of moral explanation because their validity depends upon the assumptions and opinions which a particular scientist holds regarding his fellow men.

Section 6.2 is broadly concerned to show that, while causes are an important element of explanation in social science, they are also a form of moral explanation. The argument is composed of two parts: section

6.2.1 attempts to demonstrate that the concept cause cannot mean 'sufficient condition' when applied to human action, but that, instead, it means 'warranting condition'; as such, it is argued, causal explanations rest on verstehen explanations, a type of explanation which I have already shown to be a form of moral explanation. Section 6.2.2 analyzes another meaning of the concept cause, that in which it means the 'crucial' or 'final' necessary condition for a specific event; here again, it is claimed, the interests and purposes and values of the scientist are inevitably drawn into his explanation of an event.

Functional explanations are examined in 6.3. This section begins with a brief discussion of the nature and role of functional explanations in social science (6.3.1), primarily in order to arrive at an understanding of this type of explanation. However, there is another reason as well: for this section is punctuated by a long footnote which attempts to adduce an argument regarding functions similar to that proposed in section 6.2.1 for causes, namely, that functional explanations depend on some form of verstehen explanation for their meaning, and thus cannot be value-neutral. Section 6.3.2 tries to demonstrate that functional explanations, because they depend on a conception of the nature of the social whole one is examining -- a conception which cannot be defended on purely empirical grounds, and because they create standards in terms of which both these wholes and the members of these wholes must be judged, are a form of moral explanation.

Chapters 7 and 8 are both of a piece as well. Chapter 7 leaves the discussion of the nature of social science behind; in fact, in it I explicitly assume that there can be a value-free science of man. Instead, I now proceed to analyze the claim that there can be a science of policy which applies the laws of this new science to objectively solving those political problems concerned with the means to the accomplishment of an already prescribed end. My criticism of this claim consists of a two-

pronged attack: section 7.1 argues that the means which one adopts to achieve an end can never be decided on morally neutral grounds because which criterion one employs as a standard in terms of which various alternative courses are to be judged, as well as the concrete meaning one gives to this criterion (such as efficiency), cannot be decided on objective grounds; section 7.2 asserts that, even if such means were determined on neutral grounds, to adopt solutions which are technically the best in obtaining a given end is itself a political act reflecting a definite moral view as to what society ought to be like (I attempt to demonstrate that this is the case by showing how one might wish to reject such scientific solutions to a community's political problems on moral grounds. These moral grounds rest on assumptions which are in direct opposition to the assumptions of the technological view of society which I adumbrated in chapter 4).

Chapter 8 takes the argument a step further; for it attempts to show that the whole notion of a policy science objectively determining even the best means to a prescribed end rests on a profound misconception about the role which politics plays in social life. Political problems are not problems in the sense of questions which have a specific answer; rather, their 'solution' consists, at least in part, in some sort of arrangement whereby the civic community is maintained as a community. Politics, by its very nature, involves compromises, conciliation, and arbitration.

Not only does the belief in the possibility of a scientific political decision betray a misunderstanding of political life; it may also have, and in some cases demonstrably has had, profound impact on the theory and practice of contemporary politics. The thesis ends by cataloguing a few of these; basically, they all result in an elitist and conservative view of contemporary society. It is in this way that the doctrine of a policy science, which was inaugurated in an attempt to eliminate as much of politics from communal life as possible, ironically ends as an ideological cover for a certain political position regarding modern industrial society.

But in light of what I have been arguing in this thesis, this should come as no surprise; for politics cannot be replaced by science, and when the notion that it can enters the political arena, it thereby automatically assumes a political character.

"...They reduce everything to one common cause--environment. Environment is the root of all evil--and nothing else! A favourite phrase. And the direct consequence of it is that if society is organized on normal lines, all crimes will vanish at once, for there will be nothing to protest against, and all men will become righteous in the twinkling of an eye. Human nature isn't taken into account at all. Human nature is banished. Human nature isn't supposed to exist...They maintain that a social system, emerging out of someone's mathematical brain, will at once organize mankind and transform it in an instant into a sinless and righteous society, and that much quicker than any living process and without any normal historical development ...That's why they dislike the living process of life so much! They don't want a living soul! A living soul makes demands, a living soul scoffs at mechanics, a living soul is suspicious, a living soul is retrograde! The sort of soul they want may smell of carrion, and it may even be possible to make it of rubber, but at least it is not alive, at least it has no will, and least it is servile and can be guaranteed not to rebel! . And the result of this is that they reduce everything to bricklaying and the planning of corridors and rooms in a phalanstery. The phalanstery, of course, is all ready, but unfortunately human nature is not ready for the phalanstery. Human nature wants life. It has not completed the living process. It is too soon for it to be relegated to the graveyard. You can't jump over human nature by logic alone...Reduce it all to a question of comfort? What an easy solution to the problem! So temptingly clear, and no need to think at all! The main thing, of course, is that there is no need to think."

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Crime and Punishment,
part 3, chapter 5.

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PREFACE

The fundamental aim of this thesis is to attack the common belief that social science can solve the political and social problems which face mankind, that there can be a 'policy science' which will rationalize the social world in a way that engineering has rationalized the physical world. As such, it is a work in political philosophy. However, in order to accomplish this task, it has been necessary to produce arguments from a variety of fields. The thesis is divided into two main sections: Part I is an Historical Review based on the methodological writings of some historically important social scientists, and is intended to establish the doctrine I wish to attack; Part II is an Analytic Critique of this doctrine based on materials from the philosophy of action (Chapter 5), the philosophy of the social sciences (Chapter 6), and political theory (Chapters 7 and 8). The thesis is meant to be a sustained argument of which, obviously, Part II is the more important. I hope that its eclectic nature has not obscured its direction nor dissipated its power.

I wish to thank Professor John Plamenatz of All Souls College for his extremely generous and helpful aid in the writing of this work.

I. HISTORICAL REVIEW

"In the scientific order, methods; in industry, technical procedures; in education, discipline; everywhere, divisions and series--this is what will progressively raise the basis of societies to the level of the most sublime intelligence..."

Proudhon, Oeuvres completes,
III, p. 197.

"The Dreams of Reason produce Monsters."

from the painting by Francisco
Goya (italics mine)

1. Introduction

"In the old system society is governed essentially by men; in the new it will no longer be governed except by principles."

Saint Simon, Oeuvres choisies,
II, p. 372.

1.1 Purpose

This thesis is intended to be a primarily analytical critique of the notion of policy sciences. By 'policy sciences' I mean that objective application of the laws of social science to solving the political problems of a particular society which has been, and continues to be, envisaged by the great majority of those in the social scientific tradition. As will become clear, this notion itself depends on a belief in the ethical neutrality of the social sciences, as well as a certain interpretation of the role politics ought to play in the affairs of men, and it is these notions to which I will direct my primary attention. In the light of this, perhaps the most obvious method of proceeding would be to immediately reduce the notion to a simple statement representing a consensus of the views held by the social scientists themselves, and then to pose the questions that would naturally arise from this statement and which this thesis would proceed to answer.

Instead, for a number of reasons, I have decided to commence with an historical review. In the first place, the issues with which I am concerned are not immediately obvious; a whole thicket of intertwined concepts, theories, beliefs, and, most importantly, quite fundamental assumptions, are so intimately involved with each other that a dense obscurity often results when this topic is discussed. Quite simply, then, the historical review is intended as a means by which, through

the process of narration, the nature of the problems and their relation to other issues will become clear.

Another reason for beginning in this manner is that I want to demonstrate that the belief that social science can provide the theoretical foundation for an applied science of society, resulting in either the more naive 19th century conception of the social scientist as a political legislator - saviour, or the more sophisticated 20th century view of him as a piecemeal social engineer, is not an isolated theory restricted to a few perverse thinkers, but is rather the generally held view in social science. More than this, I also want to establish that this view constitutes an extremely important conviction, in that it has helped to determine not only the conventional expectations toward the whole enterprise of social science held by the social scientists themselves, but also the form and direction that social theory itself has taken.

By giving a brief account of the notions regarding the relationship between the objective status of social theory and its relation to political practice adopted by some of the more important social scientists from Saint Simon to the present day, I want to elucidate the development of what, in terms of contemporary theory, can only be described as a doctrine embedded in social science. Moreover, by proceeding historically, my analytical task will incidentally be made somewhat easier, in that it will not be necessary to investigate those aspects of the doctrine which are no longer thought relevant.

Finally, a third reason for beginning with an historical account is that it is worth doing in itself. While there have been several quite useful descriptions of certain periods in the life of this doctrine,¹

1. Cf., e.g. F.A.Hayek, The Counter-revolution of Science, esp. pp.105f.

or certain aspects of it,¹ it does not seem as if an entirely satisfactory account has been written. By satisfactory I mean one that encompasses the whole period of social science; one that concerns itself with the notion of an applied science of society from the dual viewpoint of its relation to social theory on the one hand, and its relation to political affairs on the other; and lastly, one whose narrative attempts to remain impartial.

To make the doctrine of an applied social science concrete; to clarify its assumptions; to establish its importance in the tradition of social science; to describe its shifts and peculiar forms; to locate it within a tradition of thought; and to examine its ramifications for political theory - these are some of the reasons for beginning with history.

1.2 Organization

The history of social science is an enormous subject. A comprehensive examination of even that narrow aspect of it with which I am concerned would be an undertaking in itself - not least because practically every major social scientist has written on the question of the objective status of the descriptions and explanations of his discipline and the resultant role they ought to play in political life.

Fortunately, however, because there is an intimate connection, as I shall show, between, on the one side, a theorist's remarks on the value -

1. Cf. e.g., Arnold Brecht, Political Theory, esp. pp. 165-260 and T.S. Simey, Social Science and Social Purpose, esp. pp. 25-36 and Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6.

neutral status of social theory and the consequent role in political decision-making it is hoped it will play, and, on the other, this same theorist's conception of the nature of social science in general, it is possible to simplify my historical task by utilizing the divisions and distinctions normally adopted when discussing this science. In other words, a theorist's views regarding an applied science of politics, whether such a science is conceivable, and if so of what it would consist, follow from his conception of the nature of social science, its field of inquiry and its methods: they are neither incidentally nor accidentally related, but are all of a piece. For this reason it is possible to adopt the fairly standard division^{*} of the science into two traditions, the Empiricists and, for lack of a better name, the Weberians.

These two traditions differ on a great many fundamental questions: in their conception of the nature of science; in their views of the nature of social science - which implies differences of opinion with respect to the kinds of questions it is thought ought to be asked regarding social behaviour and social institutions, with respect to the methodology to be adopted in order to answer these questions, and with respect to the kinds of explanations to be offered as answers; and they differ in their attitude toward the role that values do play, and ought to play, in the social sciences. However, as will become apparent, there is an underlying unity of opinion regarding the ultimate neutrality of the social sciences and the expected role they will play in politics, a unity which stems from assumptions regarding the possibility of a science, conceived as analogous in some sense to the natural sciences, of human action. It is these root assumptions that I intend to con-

* Cf. e.g. Percy Cohen, Modern Social Theory (London, 1968).

front; but they will only become manifest as I examine the superficial differences of the two traditions.

1.3 Political Theory

Before undertaking the historical account, I would like to mention briefly the political implications of the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences. I am intending here to direct attention to the relevance of this doctrine beyond its quite obvious importance for the philosophy of the social sciences, and to elucidate its position in the wider field of political theory. For it is the political implications of this doctrine which are the central concern of this thesis.

As we shall see, social science grew out of, and continues to be sustained by, the perceived political and social disorders associated with industrialization, as well as the concomitant belief, which is rooted in the same Rationalism as the Industrial Revolution itself, that man can alter his own social arrangements as he wishes, that he can solve his social problems in a manner qualitatively different from what was the case before the arrival of the social sciences.¹ In the past, customs, mores, social institutions and political leaders were considered as either theologically prescribed or as simply ordained by Tradition and thus somehow necessary; now the sociologist would demythologize and detheologize the social order, forcing men to accept that its relations are man made, and that therefore they can be changed by him as well. The analogy is repeated interminably that just as man gained control

1. Cf., Morris Ginsberg, Sociology (Home University Library, London, 1934), p. 244: "The conception of a self-directing humanity is new and as yet vague in the extreme. To work out its full theoretical implications, and, with the aid of the other sciences, to inquire into the possibilities of its realization may be said to be the ultimate object of sociology."

over nature through the techniques of the natural sciences, and so initiated a revolution in material betterment, so also he will be able to direct and control social change, resulting in a new era of Order and Progress in man's history. The source of the power of the social sciences would be the prescience gained from their predictions, in the same manner as in the natural sciences.

But, it is claimed, it is only by adopting a scientific attitude towards society that this control will be realized. By this is meant that the older, traditional approaches of political thought, which mingled among their factual observations mere opinion, which expressed subjective dispositions and preferences, and which judged doctrines and theories in terms of particular interests or some vague conception of human needs and wants, must be abandoned as belonging to a stage in man's thought equivalent to the time when he regarded material objects as enchanted beings who reacted towards him. The social scientist would abstract himself from his social world, just as his brother natural scientist did, to gaze on it with a dispassionate eye; for it is bias which prevents man from discovering the true order of society, and as such is the source of his impotence in dealing with social problems. Sociology explicitly disavows the evaluative and emotional orientation of other sorts of political thought; it is marked by detachment and objectivity. Scientific criteria will replace emotion, arbitrary power, and persuasiveness as the source, and justification, for human action, and men will increasingly regulate their social affairs by consulting scientific procedures and knowledge.

From this it can be seen that it would not be wholly wrong to claim that the avowed ethical neutrality of the social sciences arises out of their proposed political function; and, since this political function

is one of the more important reasons for social science at all, and one that shapes the form it takes, it ought to be clear the degree of significance attached to the question of its scientific objectivity. But there is even a larger significance for this asserted neutrality of the descriptions and explanations provided by the social sciences, and this has to do with politics itself.

1.3.1 Argument

In the first place, if social science were to result in the kind of knowledge it promises, the whole character of political argument would alter. In general, political debate would become scientific debate, in which the universal laws of social behaviour established by the social sciences would serve as a reference in terms of which many disputes about social policy might be settled. The important shifts involved here are that in scientific arguments what is to count as evidence is publically accepted; the procedures to determine whether the evidence is good or not are universally agreed; the observations are impersonal, meaning that any person, regardless of political viewpoint, given the same situation and the same means of analysis, will report the same findings; the knowledge itself is interpersonally transmissible from scientist to scientist; and lastly, the theories are objectively verifiable through the testing of empirical predictions. Obviously, political arguments at present are exactly the opposite of this.

Of course, this does not mean that argument would cease. There would remain, at least for most 20th century theorists, questions as to the ends of policy, questions which are philosophical in character; and even for 19th century theorists there would have remained strictly scientific arguments. What is important is that over a large area of

political life arguments would become separated from one's personal preferences, and bias, emotionalism, subjective values, idiosyncratic interests, and special tastes would play no part. The line of discussion would no longer be arbitrary, contingent on personal characteristics; it would become instead objective and impersonal, dictated by previously agreed upon considerations as to what is relevant.

1.3.2 The Expert

Another change in political life would be a direct result of this shift in the character of political argument: for, by definition, only experts in the social sciences can undertake such arguments. Thus, the qualifications of those who ought to make decisions become quite radically narrow; and education in the social sciences would become a sine qua non of enlightened political leadership. Moreover, since their decisions must be judged on scientific grounds, the responsibility of these experts could only be to other experts. It is simply not possible for nonscientists to determine the worth of the expert's decisions; consequently, they would not be accountable to them for the decisions they made.

The objectivity and impersonality of the social scientist means that his personal beliefs, values, and interests cannot be adduced as factors which bias his prescriptions, thereby disqualifying his asserted special competances. The scientific character of his conceptions means that he is immune to attack by laymen. The doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences is one element supporting the so-called rise of the expert, as well as advocating it.

1.3.3 The Nature of Government

There are important implications for the theory of government that attend these shifts in the character of political argument and the rise of the social science expert. Obviously, the theory of representation would be affected, for in those areas amenable to scientific adjudication democratic procedures are inappropriate. As Comte pointedly remarked,

In astronomy, physics, chemistry, and physiology there is no such thing as liberty of conscience; that is to say that everyone would deem it absurd not to place confidence in the principles established for these sciences by competent thinkers. If the case is different in politics, this arises from the circumstances that, the old principles having been abandoned while the new are not yet formed, established principles during this interregnum do not in a just sense exist.¹

Means would be taken to ensure that only qualified experts, an educated elite, make such decisions. In general, as the social sciences expanded their domain, whole areas of life formerly discussed and evaluated in political terms would become apolitical - Saint Simon's

Politics will become a science of observation, and political questions handled by those who have studied the positive science of man by the same method and in the same way that today one treats those relating to other phenomena.²

In other words, the political leadership exercised by individuals would be replaced by the impersonal administration of technique. The scientific rationality of bureaucracy would replace in many spheres of life the irrationalism of parliaments and merely political executives.

As a result, the state, almost inevitably,³ would be conceived in

1. 'Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for Reorganizing Society! The System of Positive Polity.' in The System of Positive Polity, Appendix to volume iv, p. 531.

2. Oeuvres de Saint Simon et d'Enfantin (Paris, Dentu, 1865-78), Vol. XX, ('Organisateur'), p. 197.

3. but not necessarily. For example, Spenser thought that the 'laws' of social science proved the opposite, namely, the efficacy of laissez-faire. But he is in a decided minority on this; indeed, almost every theorist mentioned in this thesis falls into what has been called the Organizational School of Industrial Society. (For an incisive attack on Spencer's muddled thinking in deriving laissez-faire politics and economics from the organic analogies of his social science, cf. T.H. Huxley, Fortnightly Review, Vol. X (N.S.), 1871, pp. 525-543 (esp. pp. 534-535).)

activist terms; for, after all, the utility of social science is that it can direct and guide man's social arrangements toward his own good. Man must engineer his own institutions according to scientifically accurate canons; he must free himself from the unconscious, willy-nilly determination of his future by unknown forces; he must organize his resources to his own design. In short, man must Plan; and the function of the social sciences is to provide the theoretical foundation that makes this planning possible.

The doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences is an important theoretical weapon in, as well as the result of, the gradual changes in political institutions that by now are obvious to all: the growth in the importance of the central government; the increasing importance of bureaucratic decision-making; the claimed irrefragability of expert decisions as beyond the capability of ordinary citizens to comprehend, much less judge their worth; the overwhelming advocacy of increased planning as the best way to solve political and social problems. It would be both juvenile and quite absurd to claim that this doctrine is either responsible for these changes, or that these changes would reverse themselves if the doctrine were proved to have been in error. But it is true that how men regard these changes, how they assess responsibility, whom they assign the task of making political decisions, how they argue against specific decisions - how these sorts of issues are settled, at least in theory, would be quite dramatically affected by any significant change in this doctrine. For it would mean that politics, and political argument, and even political philosophy, are, after all, indispensable in the deciding of political questions, even those questions once thought amenable to scientific management, those issues thought solvable by a so-called policy science.

Indeed, one of the principal themes of this thesis is that the attempt to avoid the vicissitudes and intractability of political debates, their provocation of emotion, their seemingly perverse obsession with power, their passionate devotion to self interest or to some nebulous vision of what the true human needs and wants are, their essentially factious nature, in short, the attempt to sublimate politics and to replace it either wholly or in large part with a scientific, objective, impersonal, neutral procedure is in theory misconceived.

But already I have proceeded too quickly, making assertions without presenting the evidence. What is needed is to turn directly to the historical review of the growth and development of the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences in so far as it is related to beliefs about policy-making. As I have already stated, this review will be divided into two major sections: the first discusses the Empiricist Tradition; the second, the Weberian Tradition.

2. The Empiricist Tradition

The time has come for Sociology...to assume the exacting character befitting every science...for so long as it remains involved in partisan struggles, is content to expound common ideas with no more logic than the layman, and, consequently, presume no special competence, it has no right to speak loudly enough to silence passions and prejudices. Assuredly, the time when it will be able to play this role successfully is still far off. However, we must begin to work now, in order to put it into condition to fill this role someday.

Emile Durkheim, Rules of the Sociological Method

2.1 Foundations: the Inductive Conception of Science

By the Empiricist Tradition I mean that tradition of discourse which is united in its conception of the scope and method of the social sciences as being essentially similar to that of the natural sciences. What does this imply?

In the first place, both sciences are formulated in terms of an epistemological empiricism, a formulation generally associated first with Francis Bacon. The key concepts involved in this view of science are observation and verification. Science is that method of thought in which man attempts to perceive the world external to him directly, as it is, not coloured by subjective bias, personal speculation, or individual temperament, preference, belief, or desire. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to drain the mind of preconceptions, making it a tabula rasa, an immaculate slate able to witness and record the events that actually do occur outside in the world. Gradually, as one discerns among his observations the occurrence of consistent relations among phenomena, a set succession of antecedents and consequents, or dominant facts characteristic of a certain kind of being, a regularity of events becomes manifest. It is these regularities which are the ultimate data

of experience; as such, therefore, they provide the material basis for any explanation of how things happen. Moreover, once one understands some of these, what are to be termed causal relationships, it is possible that they will act as hypotheses to explain other, more problematical observations; thus, the process continues as other observations are combined until one establishes important and invariable relationships, or Laws.

But this is only permissible after one has tested his hypotheses in a variety of publically reproducible experiments designed to scrutinize the data, substantiate observed relations, and finally verify the Law. The importance of the Law, and the utility of the scientific enterprise in general, is its implied prediction that, given a certain set of conditions X, Y will occur: for it is this predictability which provides man with the knowledge through which he gains control over the natural world, either by effecting a change in the physical conditions themselves, or by preparing himself for the assured consequences by adapting his arrangements. It is this foreknowledge which is the source of science's power. Moreover, prediction is also an important device in the verification process itself, since it is predicted outcomes that experiments are designed to test.

It will be observed that throughout this entire procedure non-testable statements are excluded; that it is the direct observation of facts that provides the criterion of truth or falsity; that this observation is public, reproducible, and that it is independent of the character of the observer. All of this results in a body of knowledge which is factual, impersonal, reliable, objective, and useful to men for living in the world.

The empiricist tradition, conceiving of science in this way, sees

no reason in theory - there are quite obvious reasons in practice, not the least of which is complexity - why this method should not be extended to man's actions and his social relationships. In this way a full body of scientific laws analogous to that of the natural sciences will result which will serve the same predictive functions, in this case, for the control of specific social institutions and eventually even for whole societies. In this way it will provide an invaluable guide to the policy maker, for he will then be able to depend on an objective, non-partisan body of knowledge on which to fashion his decisions.

Some might argue that this quite obviously involves the unwarranted (on empiricist principles) denial of the freedom of the will; in fact, this objection is invariably raised and felt to be so pertinent by even the empiricists themselves that they have often felt compelled to reply.¹ But this is not the case: all that is assumed is that there is a regularity of action in an individual's or group of individual's behaviour and that these activities are organized in discernible patterns - neither a particularly startling assumption, and ones, in fact, observed in everyday life all the time.

Another objection might arise with regard to the obvious role that values, which are an 'internal' phenomenon, play both in man's activity, as opposed to the behaviour of particles, trees, and fish, as well as in the observation and description of this value-activity. With respect to the former, i.e. the place of values in man's activity, the empiricist's answer generally is that individual values exhibit themselves in behaviour which is observable, and that collective values are manifest in the actual activity of groups and institutions in the relationships and conflicts which comprise the social process. What is not observable is not admissible; but this ensures an objective account; and since it is

1. Cf., e.g., J.S.Mill, A System of Logic, Bk. VI, Chapter 2.

social behaviour with which social science is concerned, this limitation is not severe.

It is the latter problem, i.e. the possibility of a value-free observation and description of value-laden activities, with which this thesis is specifically concerned, and which I will subsequently proceed to examine in detail. In general, the empiricist holds that the observation of man's activity can be ethically neutral in a quite straightforward way, that as a scientist his mind can and should be the non-judging, non-interfering tabula rasa it is in its natural science activities. It seems quite obvious that one can distinguish describing a man's activity and explaining why it took the form it did, from evaluating that same activity, perhaps recommending it as admirable, or even condemning it as infelicitous.

These broad conceptions link the empiricist tradition in the social sciences; they are its roots. It is now appropriate to examine in some detail its flowers, which do, after all, provide the themes distinctive to the social sciences, and with which I am directly concerned.

2.2 Saint Simon

It is appropriate to commence this review with Saint Simon. He is usually considered the Father of the Social Sciences. He wrote at the birth of the Industrial Revolution and in the wake of the French Revolution, i.e. at the beginning of the modern period. He treats the issues of this thesis with a vivid, brilliant, almost abrasive verve. His thoughts are baldly expressed, often undigested, so that their roots and assumptions are clear. His ideas are the fountainhead of much later thought.

Besides all of this, Saint Simon was an eclectic thinker who combined various strands of the thought of his time in order to bring them

to bear on the social problems that arose from the crises in Western civilization, of which France in 1800 was the most conspicuous example. As such, he is useful as a conduit through which to focus the thought of the past.

Because of all these reasons, perhaps it is wisest to start with a brief discussion of some of Saint Simon's predecessors. Unfortunately, this must assume an all too sketchy form; and not only because I am merely interested in a part of these theorists' thought, the part relevant to the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the sciences, but also because I can discuss this part only briefly. Nevertheless, by starting here the assumptions which are the roots of this doctrine will be more clearly visible. Moreover, being forced to proceed in this fragmentary fashion forces me to state their assumptions in a bald way: hopefully, clarity rather than superficiality will be the result.

It was opposite the Ecole Polytechnique that Saint Simon took up residence in 1798 to prepare himself through education so that he could henceforth interpret for the world the significance of scientific progress both for the study of societies and their governance. We might well begin, therefore, by asking, what tradition of thought did he absorb during those lavish dinner parties he utilized as a means to assimilate the knowledge of his time?

2.2.1 Predecessors

The ideas of Francis Bacon furnished some of the more fundamental notions discussed among the intellectuals of the period. Both the Encyclopedists and the Ideologues had popularized Bacon's theories,* and

* Bacon's name was often invoked. For example, in their preface to the first volume of the Encyclopedia, Diderot and D'Alembert call Bacon, "this great author to whom we are chiefly indebted for our Encyclopedic plan." In his second lecture at the Sorbonne, Turgot exclaimed, "Bacon had already traced for posterity the road she had to follow." (Writings, p. 172). And Condorcet nominates Bacon, along with Galileo and Descartes, as one of the initiators of the modern age (Sketch, p. 121).

around the turn of the century new translations of his work were being published in France.* Saint Simon himself was to write, "Bacon will speak through my voice..."¹ For our purposes, Bacon is important for his conception of science; his notion of the utility of knowledge; his appreciation of science's implications for society; and, most directly, for his discussion of the role of bias.

As to his conception of science, I have already given a brief account. In this respect, he is most significant not only for his emphasis on observation and his well known remarks about the need in this for experiments, nor only for his insistence that only verified knowledge is true; he is also important for his assertion that men ought to pose only certain sorts of questions when confronting the world. He desired to sever what he took to be man's bondage to erroneous philosophical systems, not only because of their false conclusions, but essentially because

it is a far greater evil that they make the quiescent principles, wherefrom, and not the moving principles, whereby, things are produced, the object of their contemplation and inquiry. The former tend to discourse; the latter to works.²

Man must discover how things work, and not bother about fruitless questions why they are what they are, i.e. questions concerning their 'nature' or 'purpose', because such questions are unproductive. Teleological speculations short circuit any attempt to see the manner in which things affect

* The inspirer of Saint Simon's Essai sur l'organization sociale (1804), in which the organization of the world would be placed under the spiritual direction of a college of scientists, was explicitly Condorcet, who, in turn, cites Bacon's New Atlantis as the source of his inspiration. In fact, at his death in 1795 Condorcet had left a commentary on Bacon entitled Fragment sur l'Atlantide, ou efforts combines de l'espece humaine pour le progres des sciences. This was even appended to the 1804 edition of the Esquisse.

1. Selected Writings, ed. by F. Markham, p. 24 (from 'Essay on the Science of Man').

2. Novum Organum, Aphorism lxvi, p. 273. (The page numbers refer to The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon, reprinted from texts of Ellis and Spedding, ed. by John Robertson.). Cf. Aphorism lxxxvii.

one another by guiding one's attention toward mysterious and invisible Final Causes; they are of no help in identifying the mechanical relationships of X's producing Y's, knowledge which is essential if science is to have utility.

And Bacon proposed a strongly utilitarian view of science. For him, the sciences were not idle speculation nor the mere indulgence of curiosity; in his mind, their sole object was an increase of human capacity. Thus he wrote that "the true and lawful goal of the sciences is none other than this: that human life be endowed with new discoveries and powers."¹ Here is the foundation of the modern idea that science can be organized and disciplined into a body of procedures which are applicable to human problems, that science can be used by man to master his environment. Bacon proclaimed:

Human knowledge and human power meet in one; for where the cause is not known, the effect cannot be produced. Nature to be commanded must be obeyed; and that which in contemplation is as the cause, is in operation as the rule.²

What is particularly striking about this conception is not that knowledge is useful, which is an idea as old as the Greeks, but that the knowledge of one's external environment, in this case of Nature, is crucial. By providing an objective causal account of the world in which he lives, instead of trying to speculate about essences and to intuit 'ends' in a never ceasing round of speculative quibbling, men could truly increase their comprehension of this world - with untold power as the reward.

Both of these ideas are combined in the New Atlantis, where Bacon extends his vision to include the social world as well. For here is an

1. Novum Organum, lxxxix, p. 280; Cf. Aphorism cxxix, p. 300-1.

2. Ibid., III, p. 259.

imaginary community which is arranged in order to enable its inhabitants to achieve dominance over Nature by progressive discoveries and inventions. It is guided by a college of scientific investigators whose function is the discovery of new truths to alter the conditions of life. The leader of Soloman House declares: "'The end of our Foundation is the knowledge of causes and secret motion of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible.'"¹ At its roots the 'scientific society' was concerned with material production as a means to gratifying man's desires and coating his life with comfort; the proper organization of scientific-economic affairs was to be the means by which human happiness was to be achieved: this is the vision which the Father describes. At its very inception science is connected with a technological view of the world.

All of this rests on Bacon's ideas about bias;² for he believed that man could acquire a knowledge of nature only if he purged his mind of its imperfections. The Idols of the mind obscure the understanding, preventing man from accurately perceiving the world around him, colouring his mind's eye with superstition. He writes that

as an uneven mirror distorts the rays of objects according to its own figure and section, so the mind, when it receives impressions of objects through the sense, cannot be trusted to report them truly, but in forming its notions mixes up its own nature with the nature of things.³

He characterizes them as Idols of the tribe (in which the Will dominates, and biases a man's opinions); the cave (in which the emotions of personal experience prevail, thereby interfering with clear vision of reality);

1. New Atlantis, p. 727.

2. Cf. Novum Organum, Aphorisms xxxviii-lxvii, pp. 263-274.

3. "The Plan of the Great Instauration", p. 250.

the marketplace (in which the prejudices and subtle contortions of words subvert truth); and the theatre (wherein dogmatic systems reign, closing the mind to the world around it.). Bacon intended his critique as a liberating exercise;¹ for the precondition of true knowledge, and hence of proper action, was the removal of subjective opinion, unsubstantiated belief, and personal emotion.² It is only in neutralizing his knowledge that man can progress.³ Here is the inception of the utmost significance connected with the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of science: without it there is no science, and without science there is no acknowledged and reliable guide for action.*

1. "To point them out, however, is of great use; for the doctrine of the Idols is to the Interpretation of Nature what the doctrine of the refutation of Sophism is to common logic." Aphorism xl, Novum Organum.

2. Cf., ibid., Aphorism cxxiv, p. 298.

3. Cf., ibid., Aphorism xlix: "The human understanding is no dry light but receives an infusion from the will and its affections; whence proceeds sciences which may be called 'sciences as one would'. For what a man had rather were true he more readily believes...numberless, in short, are the ways, and sometimes imperceptible in which the affectations colour and infect the understanding." p. 267. Cf. also ibid., Aphorism lviii: "That whatever his mind seizes and dwells upon with peculiar satisfaction is to be held in suspicion, and that so much the more care is to be taken in dealing with such questions to keep the understanding even and clear." p. 269. Cf., also ibid., Aphorism lxviii.

* In a longer essay it would be necessary to discuss Descartes here. Much, though not all, of what I am attributing to Bacon could be said of Descartes as well. At the core of his thought is the identical notion that it is only to clear and distinct ideas that one must assent (Cf., Principles of Philosophy, I, numbers xxxiii; lxvi, and especially xliii-xlv); for this reason one should not inquire into the final causes of things, but only their efficient (Cf., ibid., numbers xxviii; xxxi). For Descartes the major source of error is, as it is for Bacon, the projection of man's will into the world and viewing these projections as real (Cf., ibid., number xxxv); indeed, it is this which causes the failure to distinguish between primary and secondary qualities (Cf., ibid., numbers lvii-lxx). In general, "the chief cause of our errors is to be found in the prejudices of our childhood" (p. 194, Everyman edition), which are essentially the creations of our own individual mind interfering with the real world (Cf., ibid., numbers lxxi-lxxiv). Our principle error is that we judge "not from present perception but from preconceived opinion." (p. 196, Everyman edition).

In Bacon there is the germ of many subsequent ideas. Bacon is important for he inspires much of the thought that Saint Simon absorbed. He is also important for he linked the notions of science, technology and what was to be known as Industry, appreciating the revolution in thought they assume, and that they might lead to a change in the social order. None of these ideas does Bacon fully express or say in quite this way; but they are the background of his thought. He is especially important for my essay because it is in light of precisely this background that one must place the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the scientific enterprise.

2.2.1.2 Between Bacon and Condorcet, Saint Simon's most immediate and eminent predecessor, lies a century and a half in which many ideas rooted in the Empiricism of not only Bacon but also of Locke, as well as the rationalism of Descartes, were modified, significantly expanded and developed. Perhaps the most significant was the growth in prestige of science and the scientific method. France was one of the leaders of the new sciences which came to dominate men's mental habits during the 18th century. The importance of this movement there is highlighted, of course, by the publication of the great Encyclopedia, an enormous effort to unify and popularize the achievements of the new sciences by tracing their birth, progress, and various affinities. In this regard, D'Alembert's Discours preliminaire (1754) may be viewed not only as the philosophical underpinning of the Encyclopedia, but as a philosophical introduction to the whole period.

But more significant for the concerns of this review is the synchronous expansion of the scientific ideal so that it came to include man himself, and more particularly, man's social affairs. What I must describe, very sketchily it is true, are a few of the ideas that con-

tributed to the development of the ideal of an objective, precise, scientific Rationality as the basis for a consciously directed social order. As before, the object is to uncover the deeper assumptions upon which this notion depends.

The first development one might term the 'historicizing' of Bacon, by which is meant the idea that scientific knowledge, and it alone, progresses. In A Digression on the Ancients and the Moderns (1688), his contribution to the debate which raged during the latter part of the 17th century regarding the relative literary methods of the two periods, Fontenelle distinguished literature and art from those subjects which depend on 'correct reasoning'. He proceeded to claim that it is only with respect to the latter that, through the improvement in method and the insistence on vigorous standards of proof, there can be a decided cumulative accretion of knowledge over time.* This distinction had the twofold effect of, on the one hand, excluding 'poetical' and other inexact, non-scientific forms of understanding from the concern of those devoted to the progress of man in his other activities, especially the social and political ones; and, on the other, of encouraging the placing on scientific procedure the whole burden for the improvement of mankind.

It is thus that one finds Madame de Stael, the centre of a coterie of ideologues which included such lights as Constant and Say, the only woman Saint Simon deemed worthy of marriage to him, and to whom he dedicated his second publication, Lettres d'un habitant de Geneve (1802), reviewing the contemporary state of knowledge a little over a century

* Although not germane here, it should also be noted that Fontenelle, prefiguring Turgot and Comte, also held that scientific knowledge increased in a definite order. Cf., especially The Origin of Fables.

later in her De la litterature consideree dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociale (1800), and coming to the conclusion that 'our veritable riches are the sciences.' What she called the 'philosophy of the positive sciences', a neologism she used numerous times throughout the work, she felt to be at the heart of all human progress, not only of knowledge but in morals and politics as well. In fact, the general guiding principle of all the Ideologues was to apply reason to observed facts and to forsake a priori philosophizing as retrogressive.

Another significant development, forged by the impetus of misgovernment as much as anything else, one might term the 'politicizing' of Bacon's belief in the utility of knowledge for solving man's problems. The question, could there not be some fundamental re-orientation in social arrangements that would correspond to the radical reconstruction in the methods of thought and the principles of science inaugurated by Bacon and Descartes, was being more frequently asked. This development can be witnessed in, for example, the work of the Abbe Saint Pierre. The central part of his Project to Perfect the Government of States was the formation of a political academy which would do for politics what the academy of sciences did for the study of nature. He returned to this same theme in the Observations on the Continuous Progress of the Universal Reason (1737) where, with respect to the concerns of this review, he bemoaned the lack of progress in 'practical reason', especially in comparison to speculative reason. By 'practical reason' he meant ethics and politics, and he declared that it was a grave misfortune that Descartes and Newton did not devote themselves to perfecting these sciences; he proposed again that the State found Political and Ethical Academies so that these subjects would become scientific, progress, and therefore contribute to the solution of man's political and social problems. For

Saint Pierre, it is science which will lead to the satisfaction of men's social wants and thus contribute to his happiness.

This theme is carried forward by Condorcet, to whom I shall return in a moment, and by, among others, the dominant spirit of the Ecole Polytechnique,^{*} Lagrange, in his Essai d'arithmetique politique (1796). His was the spirit of mechanical engineering, namely, that man's knowledge could be stated without reference to ultimate causes or hidden forces, but merely as a description of the laws by which the effects were connected, and that, therefore, given sufficient knowledge, all things could be predicted. This lead, in turn, to the hope that all the forces which had so far threatened and intimidated man would be harnessed and controlled. Also of special relevance here is the Second Class of the Institut National des Sciences et des Arts, the Class of Moral and Political Sciences, which in its eight years of existence, 1795-1803, both through Saint Simon and through the general doctrines it promulgated, left an important mark upon the methodology and subject matter of all the social sciences. It was here that Saint Simon could have heard lectures entitled, 'Discours sur la science sociale'; 'Des clubs et de leurs rapports avec l'organization sociale'; 'Memoire sur le genre des questions dont la science de l'economie politique comporte la solution exacte.' It was also here that Dr. Cabanis, one of the editors of Condorcet's complete works (1804), and one of the four men Saint Simon himself cites as a founder of the Science of Man,¹ delivered his extremely

* which Comte, Enfantin, and many of the Saint Simonians attended, and to which Saint Simon himself devoted most of his attention, even founding a school whose programme exactly duplicated the Ecole. Lagrange was a frequent visitor to Saint Simon's house during the Directorate.

1. Selected Writings, ed. by Markham, p. 23 (from 'Essay on the Science of Man').

important lectures on the interrelation between man's physical and his moral being. As important as this general theme was his conception of medicine which he also propounded in these lectures; as he conceived it, the purpose of medicine should not be restricted to curing individual ailments but should be directed to the higher objective of perfecting the species. In all of this lies the assumption that scientific knowledge alone held the possibility of a reconstruction of man's affairs; this was the air Saint Simon was breathing.

A third significant idea I wish simply to note, for it lies at the root of all these proposals; one might term it the belief in the malleability of human beings and their social institutions through education and through changes in social policy. This belief has many sources far too numerous and complex to chart here. But one is worth mentioning, namely, the sensationalism of Condillac, the French equivalent of Locke.* For if man's mind is the tabula rasa that psychology claimed, then the kind of man one is becomes a function of the environment in which one lives, especially one's mental and social environment. Ultimately, man is what he experiences through his senses, and for this reason his character is peculiarly plastic; for a change in the factors which determine his nature will thus automatically lead to a change in the kind of person he is. Later in the century the 'science' of Ideology was to rest on the same assumptions and to contribute to this view. For it emphasized the social determination of prejudice regarding political questions, and its raison d'etre in delving into the origin and development of ideas was so that prejudice could be removed and right action ensue.

* One of the four books which Saint Simon thought epitomized the 18th century was Condillac's Traite des Sensations. Cf. Oeuvres choisies, I, p. 78 (from 'Introduction aux travaux scientifiques du XIX^e siecle'). These ideas were fairly commonplace and can be found, e.g., in the writings of Helvetius, D'Holbach and Le Mettrie.

The fourth, and last, significant idea I wish to mention is that which asserts that man's social institutions are subject to laws analogous to those of the natural sciences. This idea assumes two forms, an institutional one, of which Montesquieu is the foremost exponent; and an historical one, for which Turgot is a most important influence, especially on the man who explicitly developed this idea, Condorcet.

Montesquieu is an important and interesting thinker with respect to many problems; he was also one of the most widely read authors of the century. But here he is important for the revolution in the study of political phenomena that he proclaimed. This he did by asserting that there are underlying causes which account for the apparent diversity of social phenomena,¹ and by asserting that these causes themselves are interrelated with one another into a more general system.² Here he was appending to the Abbe Saint Pierre's belief that science could be useful for political and social affairs the more profound idea - because without it, the Abbe's notion would be meaningless - that the scientific method was indeed appropriate for the study of society.

1. Cf., this remark in the Considerations on the Greatness and Decadence of the Romans: "It is not Fortune who governs the world, as we see from the history of the Romans. There are general causes, moral or physical, which operate in every monarchy, raise it, maintain it, or overthrow it; and all that occurs is subject to these causes; and if a particular cause, like the accidental result of a battle, has ruined a state, there was a general cause which made the downfall of this state ensue from a single battle. In a word, the principal movement draws with it all the particular occurrences."

2. This is one of the themes of the Spirit of the Laws. As Montesquieu writes in the preface: "I have laid down the first principles, and have found that the particular cases follow naturally from them; that the histories of all nations are only consequences of them; and that every particular law is connected with another law, or depends on some other of a more general extent." The Spirit of the Laws, trans. by T. Nugent (London, 1878), Vol.1, pp. xliii-xliv.

Meanwhile, as a very young man in 1750, Turgot undertook two significant tasks: his astonishing lecture¹ delivered at the Sorbonne entitled, "On the Successive Advances of the Human Mind," and his Notes on a Universal History. In these he expanded the notion of progress expressed by Fontenelle, who had applied the term only to human knowledge, so that it included society as a whole. He thought that there were general, necessary causes which determined the course of history, causes which stemmed from the nature of man and his environment.² The result of these causes was that society itself advances through regular stages, the rate of advance of each society depending on conditions peculiar to the particular locality. The importance of this assertion for the social theorist should not be underestimated, for it implies that the function of the historian is to discover these developmental laws,³ and thereby predict the future course of man's history. Of course, for religious reasons, and because he thought the essence of Nature consisted of recurring phenomena while the human order was characterized by the opposite principle of novelty,⁴ Turgot denied the equivalence of the historical

1. His first lecture of that year is not relevant here.

2. Cf. e.g., the opening of "On the Successive Advances of the Human Mind:" "all the ages are linked together by a sequence of causes and effects which connect the existing state of the world with all that has preceded it...Thus, the human race seen from its origin appears to the eye of a philosopher as one vast whole which itself, like each individual composing it, has had its infancy and its development." p. 159 (page numbers refer to The Life and Writings of Turgot, ed. by W. Walker Stephens (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1895)).

3. "This universal history embraces the consideration of the successive progressions of the human race and of the detail of the causes that have contributed to them....To unveil the influence of general and necessary causes, along with that of particular causes, and that of the free action of great men, to discover the springs and mechanism of moral causes by their effects - that is History in the eyes of a philosopher." from Notes on a Universal History, p. 175.

4. Cf., 'On the Successive Advances of the Human Mind,' p. 159; Notes on a Universal History, pp. 174-5.

sciences and the physical sciences; moreover, he never made this view of the historian quite so explicit. However, both of these tasks of history, discovering developmental laws and predicting the future, can be extracted from his thought, and awaited only Condorcet to explicitize them.

One should not assume from this, however, that Turgot was only interested in social development; on the contrary, a good deal of the lecture is concerned with the progress of human knowledge through Genius and its spread throughout the world. The reason for this is that, while Turgot does not assert a theory of integral social change, such that changes in knowledge would always be accompanied by corresponding changes in the social order, he does assert that changes in knowledge have important effects on the ways in which man's social affairs are ordered. His general idea was that as man's knowledge of nature increased so also his comprehensive understanding of the world altered, gradually being emancipated from those anthropomorphic concepts which ultimately rest on his interpreting natural phenomena as animated by a mind like his own. He divided this progress into three stages characterized by three different types of explanation, the theological, the metaphysical, and the positivistic.¹ Since in these he sees an important basis for other changes, history and historical progress thus become, at least partially, an account of the changing capabilities in man's perception of the world, transformations which were by no means accidental.

The message of Turgot to mankind - to learn the truth and to spread it - is thus a message which is essentially social. As his disciple

1. Oeuvres, ed. by Dupont de Nemours, II, pp. 294-5 (Paris, 1808-11) are usually cited; but Cf., Notes of a Universal History, p. 191 also.

Condorcet wrote in his Life of Turgot: "To know the truth in order to make the social order conform to it, that is the sole source of public happiness. It is therefore useful, even necessary, to extend the limits of knowledge...."¹ It is not difficult to see that by knowledge is meant here the objective and precise knowledge about society gained through the application of the methods of science. This knowledge would be a twofold defense against antiprogressive forces: on the one hand, moral knowledge would achieve the certainty of theorems; and on the other, moral problems would be removed from the passions and inexact prejudices which characterized moral arguments. Again, one observes the paramount role the doctrine of ethical neutrality was to play both in the progress of man's thought, in this case as he contemplated his society and its past with an eye to grasping what it was to become, and thus also the role it was to play in the progressive rationalization of his social world.²

Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet was Turgot's close friend and intellectual successor; he integrated in the most coherent and profound fashion some of the changes in thinking I have been describing; and he exerted

1. Life of Turgot (London, 1786), p. 240.

2. Condorcet included these lines in his summation of Turgot's life and thought: "He [Turgot] hoped that day would come when men, disabused of the fantastic project of opposing nation to nation, power to power, passion to passion, vice to **vice**, would occupy themselves to hearkening to what reason would dictate for the happiness of humanity. Why should politics, based like all the other sciences on observation and reason, not be perfected in the measure that one brings to observations more subtlety and exactitude, to reasoning more precision, profundity, and good judgment? Shall we dare to fix what point could be attained in this field by minds fortified by a better education...accustomed to manipulate more general and easier methods?" Life of Turgot, pp. 276-277.

the most significant influence of all on Saint Simon;¹ for these reasons it is fruitful to examine some aspects of his thought. Of course, he is most famous for his Sketch For a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind (1795),² the clearest and most classic expression of the 18th century doctrine of Progress, which conceived of the history of man as the history of enlightenment, and the form in which this doctrine was generally assimilated into Western thought. It is only with certain aspects of this doctrine that I am concerned here.

It was Condorcet's belief that in the 17th century, principally as a result of the insights of Descartes, Bacon and Galileo, reason had come to maturity.³ The basis for this claim was that, according to Condorcet, it was during this period that man had grasped the essentials of certain methods of inquiry and explanation which made it possible to distinguish beyond doubt between knowledge and mere opinion.⁴ Reason had become scientific; and in this transformation, a qualitative leap in human history had occurred. With scientists agreed upon method, there was a common standard for the evaluation of any problem, what criteria to adopt in one's interpretation, what material to accept as valid evidence, what questions to ask and procedures to follow.

Moreover, Condorcet felt that the method of science was the only legitimate method in the treatment of the problems of society. In contradistinction with Turgot, he was vehemently anti-religious, and this

1. Cf., Saint Simon, Oeuvres choisies, I, pp. 109-110; Oeuvres de Saint Simon et Enfantin, XXII, 188fn.

2. Hereinafter referred to as the Sketch. The page numbers refer to the translation by June Barraclough (London, 1955).

3. Sketch, pp. 121-123.

4. Ibid., pp. 163-164; cf., ibid., pp. 132-135 and pp. 150-156 passim.

factor helped to restore in his mind the essential unity between the historical sciences and the physical sciences. He had no doubt that both social as well as physical phenomena were amenable to scientific analysis; as he wrote in the Sketch:

the sole foundation for belief in the natural sciences is this idea, that the general laws directing the phenomena of the universe, known or unknown, are necessary and constant. Why should this principle be any less true for the intellectual and moral faculties of man than for the operations of nature?¹

Condorcet advocated the application of this notion of a natural science of society both to man's history and to specific social institutions.² History was a science to foresee the progress of the human species - and this capacity to foretell was the source of great power: it would make it possible to tame the future.³ It is this tradition of thought to which the Sketch belongs and which it fosters.

In a brief article published posthumously (June, 1795), Tableau general de la science, qui a pour objet l'application du calcul aux sciences politiques et morales, Condorcet explained the theoretical justification for the application of mathematics to political and moral sciences: the essential similarity of men's natures. In other words, since men had more or less the same needs, the same tastes, and thus the same ideas of utility, what had value for each generally had value for all. Thus, it is possible to abstract from the concrete situation and the particular individuality of men in the same way one abstracts from nature. By following out this postulate, it would be thus possible for

1. Ibid., p. 173. This occurs as part of the passage which serves as the motto of Book VI of Mill's Logic, entitled "On the Logic of the Moral Sciences."

2. Cf., ibid., p. 171.

3. Cf., ibid., p. 4: "such observations upon what man has been and what he is today, will instruct us on the means we should employ to make certain and rapid the further progress that his nature allows him still to hope for."

the State to estimate probabilities of desire and needs, and to legislate accordingly. With the accumulation of sufficient information and the application of probability theory, the State could be run by social mathematics, without irrational argument, objectively and efficiently.¹

All of this rests on the ultimate vision of Condorcet, which was that as knowledge, and thus society, progressed, individual men would grow in virtue and in happiness, that "nature has linked together in an unbreakable chain truth, happiness, and virtue."² He extended the idea that knowledge contributes to happiness a step further than the Abbe de Saint Pierre and Bacon; for him, technological growth, the kind of progress which results in a plethora of material goods, was only of secondary, although not negligible, importance; and he was far more interested in what one might call man's world-view and how this world-view affects man's behaviour, than he was in specific reforms or institutional changes in government.³ It is at this juncture that one meets the fundamental assumption of his work, and one of the fundamental assumptions of the whole period, namely, that vice proceeds from error, that harmful behaviour is the product of not knowing any better, that men naturally pursue the pleasureable and the useful, and that when some activity or procedure or device proves less costly, affords more enjoyment, consumes less energy, is more pleasant, it will be spontaneously adopted.⁴ It is error that

1. Cf., Sketch, pp. 189-191. One is reminded of Bentham here.

2. Sketch, p. 193. This is the major theme of the Tenth Epoch. Cf. especially pp. 174-184; pp. 192-195.

3. "And in order that the happiness which it promises us shall be less dearly bought...do we not need to study the history of the human spirit for what obstacles we still have to fear, and what means are open to us of surmounting them?" Ibid., p. 12.

4. "Is not a mistaken sense of interest the most common cause of actions contrary to the general welfare? Is not the violence of our passions often the result either of habits that we have adopted through miscalculation, or of our ignorance how to restrain them, tame them, deflect them, rule them." Ibid., p. 192.

stands in the way; and by error is meant both faulty methods of reasoning as well as the half-knowledge which comprises most of man's store of common sense. He saw the source of this error as twofold: on the one hand is man's continued emotional attachment to his biases and juvenile opinions which he keeps for security even after the truth has been discovered; and, on the other, what he calls 'organized imposture', by which he means the mystification of knowledge by authority so that this (false) knowledge becomes an important source of the illegitimate power of sacerdotal tyranny. The foremost example of this is, of course, the Church.

It is in the light of these beliefs that the role of science is defined; for neither of these sources of error, and therefore vice, can be destroyed until men have learned what tests to apply in order to determine whether an assertion is true or false; for Condorcet, science is a method of procedure and a test of knowledge as much as a collection of facts.¹ The importance of science is thus not just that it provides an objective, factual truth; it is also that its truth is demonstrable, established through observation and experiment, and that as such, it supplies an impersonal criterion by which all men must judge their knowledge.² Because of these characteristics, science helps to destroy individual prejudice and blindness, and to undermine the illegitimate authority which both rests on these and propagates them. By assuring

1. Cf., Sketch, p. 185.

2. "We shall give examples of the manner and extent of the precision and unity which could accrue to the whole system of human knowledge as the result of a more general and philosophical application of the sciences of calculation to the various branches of knowledge." Ibid., p. 186. Cf., ibid., pp. 198-9.

man a clear, impersonal test for distinguishing what is true knowledge from what is fiction or opinion or mere hope, science provides the means for social reconstruction and the transformation of men which will lead them into a new world of virtue. It is this legacy which Condorcet left to Saint Simon; a dream that through right reason man's happiness may be assured:

In short, will not the general welfare that results from the progress of the useful arts once they are grounded on solid theory, or from the progress of legislation once it is rooted in the truths of political science, incline mankind to humanity, benevolence and justice.¹

2.2.2 The New Charlemagne^{*}

It was not simply the theories and conjectures that I have been discussing that stirred Saint Simon; far more stimulating to him than these opinions of past thinkers were the challenges arising from the French Revolution. Everywhere he beheld the dissolution of the old order, and not only the disruption of political institutions but the deeper social and economic ones as well. France was aflame in an upheaval, adrift in uncertainty as to where the answers lay that would encourage the birth of the new order which men knew to be at hand. Thinkers devised their projects and constructed their hypotheses always with the single dominating fact of the Revolution in front of them. It is this which explains Saint Simon's devotion to his task, and the passion with which he undertook it.

1. Ibid., p. 193.

* Page numbers in the quotations refer to one of three sources: Oeuvres de Saint Simon et d'Enfantin (Paris, Dentu, 1865-78), hereinafter abbreviated to O.S.S.E.; Oeuvres choisies, ed. Lemonnier (Brussels, 1859); Selected Writings, ed. and trans. F.W. Markham, (Oxford, 1952).

But what was his task? In 1793, while in the Luxembourg prison waiting to be executed as a traitor, Saint Simon had a vision in which his supposed ancestor, the ancient king Charlemagne, commissioned him to seek his glory as a philosopher. This was not a momentary derangement for Saint Simon; indeed, it was an hallucination which became a recurrent fantasy in his life. The reason for this was that, in this moment of insight, he had suddenly grasped that he was to be the new Charlemagne sent to bring order out of the anarchy of Western Civilization, and that he was to accomplish this by creating a new system of thought, a new way of comprehending the affairs of men, a way that would utilize the new knowledge of science and which would serve as the basis for a rebuilding of the world. The question I want to answer is, how was this task to be accomplished, and, more germanely, how is it related to the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences?

Saint Simon believed^{*}, as did most of the thinkers of his age, that the way in which men behave and order their affairs ultimately depends on the way in which they understand the world.¹ For him, theory precedes and guides practice; knowledge is the source of action; what men do is the result of how and what they think. It follows directly from this that in a time of disorder and conflict, when the guidelines for action appeared to be no longer relevant or useful, it was the realm of thought, and not the realm of politics, that would ultimately provide the means for the restoration of peace and order. As he himself wrote:

Every social regime is an application of a philosophic system and consequently it is impossible to institute a new regime without having previously established the new philosophic system to which it must correspond.²

* At least until Nouveau Christianisme, where 'sentiment' assumes at least an equal role.

1. Cf., e.g., O.S.S.E., XL, 18; XIX, 39.

2. O.S.S.E., XIX, 23; Cf., ibid., XL, 40.

It was this line of reasoning that led him to criticize the Revolution as not being a true revolution at all: it had resulted only in a change of form, of personnel, and not of ideological substance.¹ It was thus that he concluded that philosophy was the most appropriate means of fulfilling his task.²

But what sort of philosophy? In surveying the course of the intellectual development of mankind, Saint Simon discovered that the kinds of explanation which satisfied man had changed during his history. He singled out two major changes in particular as being of the utmost significance:³ one, initiated by Socrates, marked the shift from a theological approach to the world, which explained events by reference to gods, to a philosophical approach, which eliminated the gods, but which continued to explain the world in terms of occult agencies such as Final Cause, Essence, Substance, and which continued to ask questions as to the reason why an event happened - as if the event were the result of some invisible agent - and to expect answers in terms of the event's origin. The second major change, prefigured by the Arabs of the Middle Ages and such scientists as da Vinci and Copernicus, but philosophically initiated by Bacon and given its scientific form by Descartes,⁴ signalled the demise of the philosophical and the rise of the scientific viewpoint, or what Saint Simon, after de Stael, called the positive philosophy.

1. Cf., Oeuvres Choisies, III, 60; O.S.S.E., XXI, 89; XXI, 10-11.

2. He puts these words into Socrates' mouth in an imaginary discourse: "the philosopher places himself at the apex of thought; from there he envisages what the world was and what it ought to be. He is not merely a spectator. He is an actor of the first rank in the moral world, for it is his opinions on what the world should be that rule human society". O.S.S.E., XL, 254.

3. This is from Introduction to the Scientific Studies of the 19th Century.

4. Selected Writings, p. 13.

They took the human intellect and refashioned it in the crucible. The proclaimed this anti-Christian truth: 'Man should believe only what is confirmed by reason and experience.' ¹

By the positive philosophy Saint Simon meant that system of thought which eliminated mysterious origins and final causes, and abandoned any attempt to dwell on essences. Instead, explanations were propounded only in terms of the perceived regularities of the world, in terms of causes which could be verified by observation and tested empirically. The essence of the positive philosophy was that "reasoning must be based upon the facts observed and discussed, instead of following the method adopted by the speculative sciences which refer all facts to reasoning."² The positivist attempts to see the objects of the world as they are, and to study events as neutral phenomena governed by universally valid laws.

For Saint Simon these changes, from the theological to the meta-physical to the positive, are obviously more than mere changes; for him they represent a progressive development in thinking. For in each case man removes the prejudices and emotional interferences which colour his vision and distort the world as it is. It is only in submitting to the facts of the world that man can come to know how it operates, and thus how to deal with it. The progress in man's reasoning consists in the gradual disentanglement of the products of imagination from the observed facts, and the moving toward the situation where facts are accepted as facts only when they are verified through inspection. The final stage is achieved by men when

if a new theory is put forward they verify it, before it is accepted, to see if it explains the facts better than the

1. Ibid., p. 17.

2. O.S.S.E., XL, p. 8 ('Memoire Science de l'homme').

existing system. If a new fact is put forward they satisfy themselves by observing that it exists.¹

This is the essence of positivism: what might be termed the 'objectification of explanation'. For Saint Simon this scientific method was the single fact which dominated the modern era.

But 'dominated' is perhaps too strong a word. For in Saint Simon's view the problem of the contemporary age was that, while the new intellectual forces had burst through the anachronistic systems in some places, specifically in portions of the natural sciences and in segments of industry, the positive attitude was not dominant in all areas of life, and most glaringly it was absent from the political world which governed men's social and economic affairs. With regards to the non-political areas which had not yet become positive, he was not overly perturbed at this situation. True, he thought that the Natural Sciences had remained merely 'critical', i.e. negatively content to attack the problems of nature and the doctrines of natural philosophy in a piecemeal fashion; and he thus called for them to become 'organic', i.e. positively organized into an integrated system of explanations. He thought that only then would science fulfill its promise of the few preceding centuries, replacing Deism (which, in turn, had replaced Polytheism) as the dominant 'religion'.² But he was also quite well aware that most of the natural sciences were becoming positive and that this progress was assured. As he wrote in 1813:

Concerning the course which the human mind has followed from the beginnings of its development, particularly the course of its development since the fifteenth century, we find that: (1) since that time the tendency has been to base all reasoning on facts which have been observed and analyzed. Already Astronomy, Physics, and Chemistry have been reorganized on this positive basis....³

1. Selected Works, p. 7 ('Letter from an Inhabitant of Geneva').

2. These are the themes of Introduction to the Scientific Studies of the 19th century.

3. Selected Writings, p. 21 ('Essay on the Science of Man').

But this was not the case with respect to man and society. For here there couldn't be any development of the positive approach to social problems precisely because there was none in existence. In order to fulfill his task the first requirement was, therefore, to propose a new science which utilized the same methods in studying man and his society that man had already adopted in studying the world external to himself. For this reason Saint Simon devoted great energy to espousing the formation of a 'physiology' of man.¹ For him the revolution in man's thinking regarding other matters made such a conversion of thought inevitable.² There was no reason to think that the same method and the same sort of explanations which had been so successful in comprehending the natural world would prove any less appropriate with respect to man. In fact, he perceived in the work of Cabanis and Bichat, physiological psychologists intent on applying naturalistic methods to man, a forerunner to such a science; thus,

physiology is not yet worthy of being classed among the positive sciences, but it has only one step forward to make to raise itself out of the conjectural sciences. The first man of genius who appears in this field will base the general principles of this science on observed facts.³

Just as earlier sciences had individually progressed through the three stages in the evolution of thought before becoming fully positive, so now the last and most difficult science must pass.

Physiology is still in the weak position which was once that of the astrological (sic) and chemical sciences. The physiologists must expel from their midst the philosophers, moralists, and metaphysicians, as the astronomers have expelled the astrologer, and the chemists the alchemists.⁴

1. The central document here is, of course, the Essay on the Science of Man.

2. Cf., Selected Writings, p. 21.

3. Ibid., pp. 22-23.

4. Ibid., p. 8 ('Letter from an Inhabitant of Geneva').

But there were many such proposals during the eighteenth century. The important contribution of Saint Simon is not only that he more than anyone grasped the significant implications of establishing such an outlook toward man, nor is it simply that he synthesized previous ideas; it is that he described some of the characteristics which this 'physiology' would possess. It was this description which was his original contribution and which entitles him to the appellation, Father of Social Science. Besides the notion that the method of such a science must be naturalistic, an idea not uncommon at the time, his two most consequential contributions were that the science of man would be social, and that it would be characterized by what I have been calling ethical neutrality. It is of course the latter which interests me; but first a word about the former.

In his earliest work Saint Simon had written that 'physiology' was the appropriate name for the science of man in society because "we are organized bodies; and it is by regarding our social relationships as physiological phenomena that I have conceived the project which I present to you."¹ Saint Simon broke with the eighteenth century conception of society as a collection of individuals organized together as a machine, no more than the sum of its parts acting together; rather, he thought of society itself as an entity, a body, an organism with its own structure. He saw all aspects of social life as interconnected, a wholeness unknown to earlier theorists. Whereas they saw parts, influence, modification, he saw unity, cohesion and interrelationship.

Moreover, whereas earlier thinkers had always thought of society as the product of the individual behaviour of the men in the group, he saw that how men behave in society is deeply dependent on the social and

1. Selected Writings, p. 8.

cultural order itself. For him, it is the system of social arrangements, the social structure, which is most significant with regards to man's social behaviour, rather than the intellectual achievements, or desires, or peculiar idiosyncracies, or education, of individuals or of many individuals taken together. Saint Simon wrote quite clearly of this:

Society is not at all a simple conglomeration of living beings whose actions have no other cause but the arbitrariness of individual wills, nor any result than ephemeral or unimportant accidents. On the contrary, society is above all a veritable organized machine all of whose parts contribute to the movement of the whole. The gathering of men constitutes a veritable being whose existence is more or less certain or precarious according to whether its organs acquit themselves more or less regularly of the functions entrusted to them.¹

As a consequence of this, the sciences appropriate to deal with society's problems are analogous to the life sciences of physiology, not the mathematical mechanics of Lagrange. Contrary to the expectations of Condorcet, he saw no prospect of removing vice from man's world simply by providing a method of judging what is true and what is opinion. It was the social mis-arrangements themselves which led men astray, and it was thus to them that one must turn one's attention. The social sciences would have to discover their own methods of investigation relevant to the social wholes which were to be the objects of their inquiry. Social science

addresses itself to considerations of a higher order. It towers above individuals, looking upon them merely as organs of the social body, whose organic functions it must examine,²* just as specialized physiology studies those of individuals.

1. O.S.S.E., XXXIX, p. 177 ('Physiologie sociale'). The last sentence presents an interesting precursor of the functionalism which will emerge from this 'Empiricist Tradition'.

2. O.S.S.E., XXXIX, pp. 176-7 ('Physiologie sociale').

* Important for the history of social science, but not here, is Saint Simon's further conception, attendant to his biological conception of society, that social science would be historical and evolutionary rather than mechanical. He considered that the job of sociology was to uncover the historical laws which governed the evolution of social bodies. Sociology was to be the study of social dynamics, or the history of societies. This tradition continues on in Comte (but who also thought of a social statics as well) and in Marx and contemporary Marxian sociology.

It is society and the social structure that had to be understood before the social chaos could be alleviated, not the behaviour of isolated individuals.

But it is the objectivity of social science, its ethical neutrality, that is the heart of Saint Simon's hopes for his new science. The characteristic of ethical neutrality was not only relevant to the social scientist as social scientist, and the kind of knowledge which he produced, but was relevant as well to considerations of the role the social sciences were to play. In some respects, the ethical neutrality of the social sciences is his most essential doctrine, because it is this attribute on which the new social order would be founded; as such, it is the means for the accomplishment of Saint Simon's mission. As he foresaw, "once all our knowledge is uniformly founded on observations, the direction of our spiritual affairs must be trusted to the power of positive science."¹ It is with this attribute and its relationship to political affairs with which I wish to complete this discussion of Saint Simon.

Basically, Saint Simon held that, as a result of what he termed the positivistic transformation in man's thinking about the world, a transformation which witnessed the methods of science being gradually extended to all areas of life, and which had already radically altered man's conception of nature, there would issue from this transformation three quite fundamental revolutions in the way man lived in the world. The first of these revolutions I have just discussed, namely, the philosophical revolution which would change the way in which man thought about himself and the affairs of his society, in which he would adopt

1. O.S.S.E., XX, p. 83.

toward himself the dispassionate stance of science that he had already taken toward nature. The second might be termed the technological revolution, in which men learn to apply the laws of science to the material world in order to change it. But it might be equally as well termed an economic revolution;* for as a result of these technical improvements, man's basic drives are turned outwards on the world of objects, and his ability to produce goods is vastly increased. Moreover, as a result, there is not only a change in the techniques of production but in the way men organize themselves for the task. This new form of organization is called Industrialism, and witnesses the combined efforts of two new classes, the labourer and the entrepreneur. Saint Simon himself said that, "the sole aim of our thoughts and our exertions must be the kind of organization most favourable to industry...."¹

The third revolution, the political one, is a result of both of the above revolutions. On the more superficial level, the social changes which result from the changes in economic organization affect the way in which power is distributed and assessed, and thus, who is to make decisions, who allocates resources, in short, who is to be in authority, will alter. New classes of society will assume control because the basis on which status is granted comes to be allocated according to who is the most productive. Function in the industrial system becomes the new principle of legitimacy; and social 'parasites' will disappear.² It is within this framework that Saint Simon's various proposals for a system of government commensurate with the needs of the time must be viewed.³

1. Selected Writings, p. 70.

2. This is the meaning of the famous parable in Organisateur.

3. Cf. L'Organisateur and Cateschisme des Industriels. If the scientists are the spiritual and intellectual power in the new society, then the producteurs are the temporal.

* I do not propose to discuss this aspect of Saint Simon's thought any further, although in some respects it is the most interesting and the most important. In fact, at one point Saint Simon refers to himself as "Founder of the Industrial Doctrine."

But the political revolution is far more drastic than this; for, as a result of the appearance of 'social physiology,' the very nature of politics itself changes. From being a conjectural, persuasive, emotional, uncertain activity, it is to become instead rational, scientific and objective. Previously, politics was a purely subjective art; now it would be detached and impersonal. Power, which had rested on irrational considerations and which was utilized usually for self-interest, would now become unbiased and unprejudiced. And these results are possible precisely because social science is neutral to its object of study, just as the natural sciences are.

In the first place, the social sciences will dramatically alter the character of political argument. Saint Simon wrote:

Politics will become a positive science. When those who cultivate this important branch of human knowledge will have learned physiology during the course of their education, they will no longer consider the problems which they have to solve as anything but questions of hygiene.¹

What does he mean by this? The point is that no one has attitudes about the general concepts of chemistry or physics; he has knowledge of them, or not. And if there are disagreements in these subjects the issues are not debated in terms of likes or dislikes, preferences or tastes or beliefs, wit or subtlety of exposition or acute sensitivity to the mood of character or to nebulous hints of change in public opinion; rather, the issues are tangible, measureable, testable. Moreover, and more importantly, in these subjects there exists a sole and exclusive truth which anyone with competence can ascertain; in them, one expects to reach mutually acceptable answers. In science, one avoids the vicissitudes of political arguments, their vague conjectures, their arbitrariness, their appeal to emotion, their intractible element of subjectivity.

1. O.S.S.E., XL, p. 29.

The arguments of science are impersonal arguments: evidence, and what is to count as evidence, does not depend on personal preference or subjective values; the conclusions of science are impersonal conclusions: they are not a function of an idiosyncratic perception of what is good, or ought to be the case, or might be if, or should be adopted. And thus, when politics becomes a science, its arguments and its conclusions will assume the same neutral character as those of the other sciences; then, it will assume the character of "scientific demonstrations absolutely independent of human will and susceptible of being discussed by all who have had the degree of instruction which would enable them to understand them."¹

The latter part of this statement introduces the second change in the nature of politics as a result of its becoming scientific, namely, that political leadership will pass to those whose competence enables them to impartially settle questions of social interest. Political leadership becomes meritocratic; the new industrial society will be governed by a scientifically knowledgeable elite.

But when politics ascends to the rank of the exact sciences... stipulations of ability will become clear and fixed and the cultivation of politics will be entrusted exclusively to a special class of scholars who will impose silence on prattle.²

And by 'prattle' Saint Simon meant the judgments of those whom one ordinarily expects to pronounce on political matters, the metaphysicians, the lawyers, the publicists, and the politicians.³ It is as inconceivable to consider every citizen as competent to judge political debates as it is to assert that everyone ought to meaningfully participate in the debates of astrophysics. The only basis for such a claim is that

1. O.S.S.E., XX, p. 194.

2. O.S.S.E., XXI, 16-17 note.

3. Cf., O.S.S.E., XIX, pp. 120-7; Oeuvres choisies, III, p. 14.

politics is not yet a science.

Fundamentally, of course, Saint Simon wanted 'knowledge' to rule, not the 'people' nor the 'politicians,' nor, for that matter, the 'experts' - except that as experts the social scientists were impersonal. Beyond this, he wanted a certain kind of knowledge to rule: not the vague speculations of social critics, nor the hortatory exhortations of public moralists, nor the practical wisdom gained through years of experience in political bargaining, but the hard, precise, detached truths of science.

Lastly, all of this means that the nature of government changes. The industrial system, the Golden Age of the human race which lies before us 'in the perfection of the social order,'¹ will, in the now famous Saint Simonian formulation, abolish all government, in the sense of government of men by men, and will inaugurate instead the era of the administration of things.² The basis of decisions would no longer be in terms of personal power, but would be the result of rational procedure and technical considerations; those making the decisions would be leaders as a result of their scientific capacity; and their pronouncements, the laws they promulgated and the policies they commended would be accepted as the correct ones because they reflected the considered judgments of impartial men weighing evidence which was itself nonpartisan and non-sectarian.

It is the method of knowing in the social sciences, a method at once objective and impartial, which provides the basis for the organization of the new industrial society, as well as the decisions made by this

1. Cf., O.S.S.E., XXI, p. 166; Cf., also Selected Writings, p. 68, ('The Reorganization of the European Community').

2. Cf., Oeuvres choisies, II, pp. 372-5; O.S.S.E., XX, pp. 144-5.

organization itself; and it is this organization which structures, orders, and guides human society.¹ This is the intimate connection between social science, industrial society, and 'administrative politics,' how what I am calling the ethically neutral knowledge of social science is its very foundation. This is the very heart of Saint Simon's vision: for it was his view that the confusions of the intellect were at bottom the cause of the confusions of society, and that both could be alleviated by the same remedy - an impartial and objective science of man.

Social science for Saint Simon was essentially a method, the method of the natural sciences, applied to society as a whole; this method was to serve as the basis of the organization of the new society which itself was the result of the 'positivistic' transformation in man's thought. I find no better summary of all of this than the ninth letter of Organisateur; quoting from it at length is a quite good way to complete this review:

In a society which is organized for the positive purpose of increasing its prosperity by means of science, art, and craftsmanship, the most important political act, that of determining the direction in which the community is to move, is no longer performed by men invested with social functions, but by the body politic itself; the aim and purpose of such an organization are so clear and determined that there is no longer any room for arbitrariness of men or even of laws, because both can exist only in the vague, which is, so to speak, their natural element. The actions of government which consist of commands will be reduced to nil or practically nil. All the questions that will have to be solved in such a political system, namely: by what enterprises can the community increase its present prosperity, making use of a given knowledge in science, art, and industry? By what measures can such knowledge be dispersed and brought to the furthest possible perfection? And finally, by what means can these enterprises be carried out at a minimum cost and a minimum time? - all these I contend, and all those to which

1. Saint Simon defined his role as social physician as: "to contribute, as much as philosophy has its power, in determining the formation of the industrial and scientific system, whose establishment can alone put an end to the present social agony." O.S.S.E., XXI, p. 5.

they give rise, are eminently positive and soluble. The decisions must be the result of scientific demonstrations totally independent of human will, and they will be subject to discussion by all those sufficiently educated to understand them...just as every question of social importance will necessarily be solved as well as the existing state of knowledge permits, so will all social functions necessarily be entrusted to those men who are most capable of exercising them in conformity with the general aims of the community. Under such an order we shall see the disappearance of the three main disadvantages of the present political system, that is arbitrariness, incapacity, and intrigue.¹

2.3 Auguste Comte *

Whereas Saint Simon was imaginative and brilliant and penetrating, he was also unorganized, erratic, and unmethodical. One must read his works with great care, for his insights are often isolated, and seldom are they sustained into a coherent argument; indeed, many of the remarks I have quoted are strewn at random throughout his work, and often represent the limit of what he asserts about a particular subject. Auguste Comte, his erstwhile secretary, was exactly the opposite of this - some would say to the point of neurosis. In fact, speaking only with regard to the issues of this review, Comte is an important thinker precisely for ordering Saint Simon's thoughts, relating them to each other in a systematic way, and extending their implications.² As a result of this, it will not be necessary to comment upon Comte's work at an inordinate length.

1. O.S.S.E., XX, pp. 199-200.

* I intend to discuss Comte with reference to only three of his works: the Cours de philosophie positive (references are to the 'free translation' of Harriet Martineau under the title The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte, 2 vols., (Tubner; London, 1875)); A Discourse on the Positive Spirit, trans. by E. Beesley (Reeves, London, 1903), originally published in 1844; and his extremely important essay, "The System of Positive Polity," first written in 1822, published in 1824, and appended to Volume IV of the System of Positive Polity, translated by Congreve and Hutton (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1877).

2. Comte, of course, produced a coherent sociology, in the form of a forerunner to the sociology of knowledge, whereas Saint Simon only promised one and described what it ought to be like. But Comte's substantive work in this field is not relevant to my purposes.

Moreover, it is only a certain aspect of Comte's thought which concerns me. The ostensible reason for the acrimonious rupture of the relationship between Comte and his mentor Saint Simon was a quarrel concerning the direction their work ought to take. Comte felt that it was necessary to concentrate on the theoretical aspects of the new science, rather than to prematurely explore its relationship to political or economic questions, or to pretend that their comments on the practical affairs of the day were 'scientific.'¹ Saint Simon, on the other hand, complained that Comte "dealt only with the scientific part of my system."² In either case, it is true that Comte was specifically interested in the theoretical issues of the nature of social science and its relation to political theory, rather than its particular political ramifications and its conversion into practice. Comte explicitly separated the methods of science both from the content³ of science and from its social-economic role.⁴ Comte believed that the only unifying concept of the positivistic stage in man's history was the scientific method itself, and that what was needed was the development of an appropriate approach for society that employed scientific procedure. It is not totally distorting, therefore, to concern ourselves with the methodological observations of Auguste Comte.

1. Comte, for example, was never enamoured, as was Saint Simon, of the Industrialist, and he never thought of him as the carrier of the Scientific Ideal.

2. O.S.S.E., XXXVIII, p. 5.

3. As Saint Simon sometimes did not; Comte would never have looked to Gravitation as the means whereby to make social phenomena understandable in scientific terms. In the Positive Philosophy Comte writes: "The only necessary unity is that of Method, which is already in great part established. As for the doctrine, it need not be one; it is enough that it be homogeneous." I, p. 14, Cf., A Discourse, p. 38; p. 161.

4. Cf., 'System' in System, IV, pp. 537-542; Positive Philosophy, II, p. 389.

The Law of the Three Stages, upon which the entire Comtean edifice rests, is, in its barest form, nothing more than an account of the transformations in the logic of explanation which have marked man's history.¹ That this logic can be the lynchpin of his entire system lies in the fact that it embraces the comprehensive relationship between man's subjective images and the world external to him; in other words, this logic is no less than the logic of the mind, the foundation of man's perception of the world, determining the kinds of questions with which he probes his environment, the kinds of answers which satisfy him, and the kind of behaviour that is a function of these perceptions.* In his account he utilized the same three stages as did Saint Simon: in the theological stage men explain phenomena by ascribing it to the independent activity of invisible beings; in the metaphysical stage they substitute 'essences,' 'final causes,' or 'faculties,' for these spirits; only in the positive stage do men see that to explain is simply to describe the relations that one observes among phenomena. These changes in man's conception of what it is to explain may be broadly characterized as the gradual emancipation of man from anthropomorphic phenomena, the elimination of his subjective projections into the world. In the final stage men refuse to accept as legitimate the metaphysical practice of invoking the caprices of the mind as tests of truth, and the theological habit of presenting abstract expressions of belief as evidence to justify

1. Thus, Comte describes positivism (the last stage) in terms of "what constitutes the explanation of phenomena, of the conditions of a genuine investigation, or of the true intention of which hypotheses should be instituted and employed." Positive Philosophy, II, p. 99.

* Whereas earlier thinkers had merely sketched these transformations, and hinted at their implications, Comte elevated them to a law, described their tortuous path, and considerably amplified their ramifications. Moreover, although I will not discuss this much further, Comte realized that these changes were so fundamental that they precipitate changes in the very nature of man, affecting not only his knowledge of the world, but his desires, motives, and aspirations as well. Cf., Discourse, ¶ 21, ¶ 48-56.

an assertion. It is thus that Comte writes:

All theological and metaphysical philosophy proceeds to explain the phenomena of the external world from the starting point of our consciousness of human phenomena; whereas the positive philosophy subordinates the conception of man to that of the external world. All the multitude of incompatibilities between the two philosophies proceed from this radical opposition.¹

In the Positive Stage explanation consists in connecting observed phenomena by rules about their co-existence or sequence. Thus it is that, in this stage, observation finally predominates over imagination;² one must eliminate the interferences of his subjectivity and submit himself to the objective world.³ The positive stage is the final step in the evolution of man's coming to terms with the world specifically because it demands the utter sublimation of the personality before it.

This is directly relevant to my theme; for what Comte is asserting is that the elimination of bias and personal interest is at the very core of the final realization which leads man to truth, and which, as we shall see, will redeem his social relationships. Man must learn to be uninvolved, neither condemning nor praising but simply observing, neither judging nor commenting nor infusing into his knowledge opinions, or aspirations, or valuations as to what is correct, right, or good. Thus, in the first work published under his own name, Comte criticized Condorcet for condemning parts of the past in the Sketch, and he did so on the grounds that

admiration and reprobation of phenomena ought to be banished with equal severity from every positive science, because all preoccupations of this sort directly and unavoidably tend to hinder or mislead examination. Astronomers, physicists, chemists, and physiologists neither admire nor blame their respective phenomena.... It should be the same in this respect in political science as in

1. Positive Philosophy, I, p. 295.

2. Cf., 'System of Positive Polity,' System, IV, pp. 550-2.

3. Cf., A Discourse, ~~77~~ 13.

all the other sciences.¹

The mention of 'political science' leads me into Comte's conception of what he later coined 'Sociology.' But first I want to draw attention to an important point which is related to Comte's idea of the nature of positive explanation. For one should not infer from what has already been said that Comte thought science consisted solely in the simple enunciation of observed facts. On the contrary, he explicitly rejected this as 'crude empiricism':

If it is true that every theory must be based on observed facts, it is equally true that facts cannot be observed without the guidance of some theory. Without such guidance our Facts would be desultory and fruitless; we could not retain them; for the most part we could not even perceive them.²

It was partially on this basis that Comte rejected the assertion that sociology should take the form of a social mathematics.³ It was thus that he advocated the establishment of a true history, one that was not just a collection of isolated facts, but one "aiming at the discovery of those laws which regulate the social development of the human race."⁴ And, in the more general terms of the logic of explanation, he claimed that "what is now understood when we speak of an explanation of facts is simply the establishment of a connection between single phenomena and some general facts...."⁵

Comte's point in this is that science is not to be reduced to the mere description of events, but consists in the explanation of these events, and this by relating the various descriptions to each other

1. 'System of Positive Polity,' System, IV, p. 534. One of the chief characteristics of mathematics which makes it the paradigm for all scientific education is its "freedom from disturbance by human passion." Positive Philosophy, II, p. 439.

2. Positive Philosophy, I, p. 3; Cf., A Discourse, 77 15.

3. Cf., Positive Philosophy, II, p. 99; Cf., 'System of Positive Polity' System, IV, pp. 577-581.

4. Ibid., p. 588.

5. Positive Philosophy, I, p. 2 (italics mine). Saint Simon's incessant call for an organic science bears some relation here.

through a whole system of Laws and theories. For Comte, the scientist is not interested in merely performing isolated observations, or even a series of observations, but in eliciting from them testable generalizations; for him, science is not an inventory of verifiable facts, but these facts understood within a theoretical framework. Comte's reasons for this are important: for he perceived that the essence of science was prediction, and that prediction is impossible without a comprehensive explanatory foundation. Again and again he exclaims that "the true positive spirit consists above all in seeing for the sake of foreseeing; in studying what is, in order to infer what will be..."¹; and asserts that one cannot see connections between phenomena except in terms of a theoretical framework.² Without this comprehensive system of explanation science would be reduced to nothing but a 'barren accumulation of isolated facts;' and furthermore, it could never serve as the basis for social reconstruction through its power of prediction. Even with the Empiricist tradition one finds at its inception a clear and dramatic awareness that, precisely because social science wishes to be a science, it must invoke theoretical formulations; and that, precisely because it wishes to be useful for making social decisions, useful, that is, beyond providing statistical information, it must develop a comprehensive body of explanatory hypotheses. As a result of this, the question as to the ethical neutrality of the social sciences devolves into the question whether this conceptual framework can be neutral, as are the conceptual frameworks of the natural sciences. To this question, of course, Comte with almost

1. A Discourse, p. 26; Cf., ibid., 22; Positive Philosophy, I, p. 16; System, IV, p. 576.

2. Cf., e.g., "no real observation of any kind of phenomena is possible, except in as far as it is first directed, and finally interpreted, by some theory." Positive Philosophy, II, p. 80.

all social scientists, would answer in the affirmative.¹

But now I wish to return to the point at which I had reached before this 'digression' on the role of theory in the sciences, and to make some remarks on Comte's conception of sociology. I have selected two aspects of his thought, not only because they are interesting, but also because they will provide the framework which I will use to organize the developments in the empiricist tradition of social science that occurred after Comte.

In the first place, Sociology was to be subject to the same neutral treatment as the natural sciences; in other words, its methodology was to be positivistic. As long as the study of man maintained its 'fatal separation from all science,'² it would remain subject to the vagaries of the theological-metaphysical stage of explanation; just as astronomers rejected astrological explanations of celestial phenomena, so also political scientists must reject this form of thought. From this it follows that

it is the habit of subjecting scientific conceptions to the facts whose connection has to be disclosed which is above all things necessary to introduce into social research.³

Thus, only observed actions comprise the data of the new science;⁴ and it is on this basis that he denies introspection as a 'parody' and condemns psychology as the 'last transformation of theology.'⁵ Moreover, while it was true that sociology must develop its own peculiar methods of in-

1. Cf., the Positive Philosophy, II, pp. 80-83.

2. Ibid., II, p.1; Cf., ibid., II, p. 454.

3. Ibid., II, p. 57.

4. Cf., ibid., II, p. 61.

5. Cf., ibid., I, pp. 21-23.

vestigation, and specifically the Historical Method, these methods are essentially the same as those of the natural sciences.¹

There is another reason why sociology was not reducible to psychology, or even to the physiological psychology of the 'illustrious Gall,' and this is because sociology is a separate science which, in addition to the laws of the individual, studies that "something which modifies their efforts, and which belongs to the influence of individuals on each other."² In other words, sociology was to be a science of society. Furthermore, like biology, "which, from the nature of the subjects concerned, must always furnish the fundamental ideas that must guide sociological research,"³ sociology was to be synthetic, i.e. study the interrelationships of the parts to the whole. In this respect, Comte is at the root of the holistic approach to social science, implying that the wholes or collectives must be studied as objectively given facts analogous to studying individuals in biology.⁴ In fact, he maintains that social wholes are more fundamental than the elements of which they consist, and that, as a result, social theory must originate from our knowledge of them.⁵

In propounding this view of social theory, Comte even proposes a kind of theoretical functionalism as a mode of explanation appropriate to this science; for he claims that from our conception of the whole we

1. Cf., Positive Philosophy, II, pp. 80-92.

2. Ibid., I, p. 22.

3. Ibid., II, p. 454; Cf., ibid., II, pp. 93-96.

4. Cours de Philosophie Positive, 5th edition (identical with the first), (Paris, 1893), IV, p. 291.

5. Ibid., IV, p. 286.

can derive knowledge about the necessary relations of the parts.¹ Indeed, this functional mode of explanation may be found in Comte's two basic divisions of sociology, social statics and social dynamics. For "the statical study of sociology consists in the investigation of the laws of action and reaction of the different parts of the social system,"² within the general framework that "there must always be a spontaneous harmony between the whole and the parts of the social system."³ With respect to the dynamic procedure, "the object of science is to discover the laws which govern this continuity, and the aggregate of which determines the course of human development."⁴

But Comte intended sociology to be not only scientific, in the positivistic sense, nor only historical, in the sense of showing the relative position of Western thought and its relation to social institutions. More than anything else, he intensely desired it to be political: the aim of sociology was to transform reality by guiding political action. Indeed, the primary purpose of Comte's enormous efforts was to construct the intellectual basis of the new society, and beyond that, to legislate for its organization.⁵ To create order out of the intellectual disorder of his time was only the precursor for establishing order in society as a whole. For Comte, political theory and social theory are inextricably bound together.

Much - though as we shall see, not all - of what Comte wrote regarding

1. Cours de Philosophie Positive, 5th edition (identical with the first), (Paris, 1843), IV, p. 526.

2. Positive Philosophy, II, p. 63.

3. Ibid., II, p. 65.

4. Ibid., II, p. 70.

5. His first published work was entitled, "Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for Reorganizing Society"; in it he explicitly states that this is the prime need of the time and 'the general scope of (my) labours' (System, IV, p. 527). He printed this in the Appendix of his last work to demonstrate to critics like Littré and Mill that this was always his overriding interest.

the role that an objectively valid social science was to play in political affairs is no more than a repetition of Saint Simon, albeit with a force and clarity unknown to his tutor. In the first place, Comte thought, as did Saint Simon, that

Opinions govern the world, or throw it into chaos; in other words, that all social mechanisms rest upon Opinions. The great political and moral crises that societies are now undergoing is shown by a rigid analysis to arise out of intellectual anarchy. While stability in fundamental maxims is the first condition of a genuine social order, we are suffering under an utter disagreement which may be called universal.¹

From this it follows naturally that the laws of thought, which explain the history of man's knowledge, also account for the laws of social development, which explain the sequence of man's history. Moreover, these laws also account for the state of violent, antinomian confusion which Comte felt was endemic to the 'metaphysical' system of government, i.e. liberalism.² For Comte saw that the methods of natural science, while gaining for man power over nature, did not help him to understand his social environment; and that, therefore, it was imperative that a new science arise to give men power over themselves. This is the, by now hackneyed, complaint that man's understanding of the physical world outstrips his understanding of himself and his society. But Comte penetrated beneath this rather superficial level: for he understood that it was not only desirable that man's self-knowledge become scientific in order to increase his control over his own affairs, something which even Condorcet said; rather, both he and Saint Simon exclaimed that it was vital for this change in outlook to occur. For natural science changes not only man's physical environment, but his ideational environment as

1. Positive Philosophy, I, p. 12.

2. For a discussion of this, cf., ibid., II, pp. 3-15.

well, and in so doing makes obsolete and ineffective the religion or philosophy which in the traditional societies had promoted order, assurance, hope, and which had established communal goals and had legitimated authority.¹ Science deprives men of the old Faith by which they had lived,* and thus destroys their old social order; it thus can cause suffering and a sense of helplessness in the face of this suffering; and it is thus urgent that a new faith, one compatible with and arising out of the positive spirit² emerge from this chaos to lead men out of the void into which he had been thrown. It is this sense of suffering and chaos which accounts both for the sense of drama in Saint Simon's and Comte's lives and the urgency in their work. Sociology, the science of man, had a great weight to bear.³

But the science of man is suited for the task: for the essence of science is to apprehend the natural order of things; from this apprehen-

1. E.g., after reviewing the 'Inconsistencies and Dangers' of the contemporary period, he says, "This survey we have made must convince us only too well of the anarchical state of existing society, under its destitution of guiding and governing ideas..." ibid., II, p. 34. Again, in the "System of Positive Polity" he writes that, while it is true that there is confusion and disagreement in politics, "this arises from the circumstances that, the old principles having been abandoned while the new are not yet formed, established principles during this interregnum do not in a just sense exist." System, IV, p. 531.

2. Positive Philosophy, II, p. 35: the positive philosophy is "the only possible agent in the reorganization of society."

3. In A Discourse, Comte defines his aim as "the transformation of the present political movement into a simple philosophic movement, of which the first and principal social result will be to establish on solid foundations a universal system of practical morality, prescribing to each agent, whether individual or collective, such rules of conduct as are most conformable to the fundamental moral harmony." p. 144, Cf., Positive Philosophy, II, p. 412; II, pp. 461-2; II, p. 394. Ultimately, of course, the weight was too great for sociology alone to bear: it is, at least partially, this emotional context which drove Saint Simon and Comte to turn finally to 'religion' as the only satisfactory solution. This urgency and sense of responsibility also contributed to Comte's developing neurosis and to Saint Simon's attempt at suicide.

* Comte says in A Discourse that "I must show explicitly that positive conceptions are finally incompatible with theological opinions of any kind" (p. 53). This is because "as soon as philosophic reasoning acquires a positive character it recognizes the fundamental rule that any proposition which is not strictly reducible to the simple enunciation of a fact -

sion can come prevision; and from prevision can come control.¹ Comte writes:

the political art remained unattempted...(but) destined to give way whenever the general reason shall perceive that here, as in other departments, phenomena are referred to real natural laws, such as habitually supply practical guidance.²

In other words, the science of man's society, which apprehends in its dynamic aspect the historical evolution of a particular society and thus the purposes around which it is organized, and which apprehends in its static aspects this society's structural principles which ensure harmony, provides man with the properly impersonal and objective knowledge by which he may guide his own destiny, or, less dramatically, by which he may adjust his affairs so that they are compatible with these principles of order.³

If this is the foundation for a new positive politics, what specific form will it assume in men's affairs? Again, as with Saint Simon, the impact of a neutral science on political affairs may be distinguished in the three areas of argument, the rise of the Expert and the change in the nature of Government.

The primary effect of an impartial science in political affairs is that the character of political argument fundamentally alters. Formally, the positive philosophy

adopts positive methods as well as doctrines, transforms the position of existing questions, the way of treating them, and

* (Contd.) either particular or general - can have no real or intelligible meaning for us." (p. 20)

1. Appropriate here is his famous epigram: "the relationship of science to art may be summed up in a brief expression: from Science comes Prevision; from Prevision comes Control." Positive Philosophy, I, p. 16. Cf., ibid., II, p. 459; A Discourse, #22-23.

2. Positive Philosophy, II, p. 435.

3. For an excellent description, cf., System, IV, pp. 558-563 ('A System of Positive Polity').

their preparatory conditions: thus affording a triple logical security for social order.¹

These changes in the nature of political argument,² the direct result of the ethically neutral character of sociology, mean in general that arguments may be conclusively settled independently of personal values.³ The point is not that no arguments will divide men: arguments occur in science all the time; rather, the point is that there will be no argument as to the kinds of considerations that will be admitted as relevant to 'rational discussion;' and furthermore, that the criteria for truth will be explicitly accepted so that one will be able to clearly determine when it is satisfied, thereby eliciting automatic agreement and permitting conclusions to be transmitted to anyone trained to understand. In political arguments there will be, as there are in scientific arguments, reliable public standards of ascertainable truth, and therefore the possibility of a universally recognizable decisive demonstration.⁴ The value of the positive approach is precisely that the "theological and metaphysical polity, aiming at the best possible government, lead to interminable discussions, since such a problem cannot be reduced to certainty,"⁵ whereas, because

the practical aim of scientific politics (is), on the contrary, to ascertain the system which the march of civilization, indicated by the past, now tends to bring about, the problem is altogether positive and can be decided by observation.⁶

1. Positive Philosophy, II, p. 407.

2. Cf., A Discourse, ~~44~~ 38-46.

3. Cf., e.g., "under the rule of the positive spirit, again, all the difficult and delicate questions which now keep up a perpetual irritation in the bosom of society, and which can never be settled while mere political solutions are proposed will be scientifically estimated to the great furtherance of social peace." Positive Philosophy, II, p. 37.

4. Cf., ibid., II, p. 397; 'A System of Positive Polity,' System, IV, p. 545; A Discourse, p. 97.

5. 'A System of Positive Polity,' System, IV, p. 564.

6. Ibid., p. 565.

As a direct result of this transformation in the nature of political argument - its becoming technical - it follows that only certain men, sociological experts, can meaningfully participate in politics. The advent of social science will "exclude the incompetent from interference and devolve these lofty contemplations upon the rare order of minds that are competent to deal with them."¹ It is absolutely necessary to root out "the pretension of every man to set himself up as a sovereign arbiter of social theories"² - just as there is no freedom of opinion with respect to other scientific disputes.³

And lastly, this means a change in the nature of government; for no longer will some men arbitrarily rule over other men through force or power or oratorical trickery for their own personal interest.⁴ The

scientific polity wholly excludes the arbitrary, because it banishes those absolute and vague conceptions which gave birth to and maintain this [arbitrary power]. Under such a regime, the human race is regarded as subject to a natural law of development which can be ascertained by observation, and which prescribes for each epoch, in the most unequivocal manner, the political course it is possible to pursue....Government by measures replaces government by men.⁵

Men will come to accept what it is necessary for them to accept with a 'wise resignation,'⁶ just as they accept the necessities imposed on them by nature; and they will adopt this attitude because they will

1. The Positive Philosophy, II, p. 407; Cf., A Discourse, p. 91.

2. The Positive Philosophy, II, p. 13.

3. Cf., the often quoted passage on the 'Liberty of Conscience' in the 'System of Positive Polity,' System, IV, p. 531 (cited in section 1.3.3. of this thesis).

4. Cf., The Positive Philosophy, II, p. 397.

5. System, IV, p. 565.

6. Ibid., p. 561; The Positive Philosophy, II, pp. 37-38.

know that, whatever policy is pursued, it derives from the nature of things, and not from the egotistical, subjective opinions or desires of individual men.*

Comte's doctrines were never very influential, neither in his own time nor later.¹ However, in the history of ideas he represents a watershed which flows, for my narrow purposes, in two directions: on the one hand, J.S. Mill and the Empiricist tradition in modern social science (section 2.4), and, on the other, Emile Durkheim and modern Functionalism (2.5). One should not assume that these are incompatible 'schools' of thought - on the contrary, they are often blended together harmoniously. It is more for expository reasons that I make this twofold division, for it provides the framework within which I intend to complete this discussion of the Empiricist tradition, bringing it forward to the contemporary period.

1. Cf., Simon, W.A., European Positivism in the 19th Century (New York, 1963), esp. pp. 94-263. By 'Positivism' here Simon actually means 'Comtism.'

* It is not relevant here to outline in detail the substantive proposals which Comte thought followed from his own social science; but there are two themes which ought to be mentioned. One is related to his holistic methodology, namely, a Corporate State in which duties are assigned according to social function (Cf., Positive Philosophy, II, pp. 398-407). The other is allied to his conception of sociology as a science of knowledge (which I have only briefly alluded to here): for if sociology grasps the relationship between knowledge and social conditions; and if the cement of a social order is its system of beliefs and values; and, lastly, if it is the spontaneous social order, rather than self-conscious political activity, which is the primary determinant of the condition of a society (Cf., The Positive Philosophy, II, pp. 65-66; System, IV, pp. 565, 554-5), then it follows that political actors, if they are rational, would pursue under the direction of sociologists, an indirect policy of affecting the beliefs and values of citizens by controlling education and moulding public opinion. Both of these are given great emphasis by Comte, and, as we shall see, also by Durkheim.

2.4 Modern Empiricism

2.4.1 J.S. Mill^{*}

The position of Comte's doctrine in England, and indeed the English speaking world, was directly dependent on John Stuart Mill. As Mill himself claimed in his Autobiography,¹ it was through his own work that Comte gained entrance to England and his doctrines became generally known. For this reason alone Mill's opinions are crucial for an understanding of the form positivism was to take. But Mill is far more important for making a decisive theoretical distinction regarding Comte's work which was to have a profound influence on the doctrines of modern empiricism.

Mill heartily accepted the idea of a social science. In fact, he conceived of his System of Logic partly as a foundation for Comte's assertions regarding the sciences in general, and the scientific nature of sociology in particular.² However, what Mill did not accept were Comte's

1. Autobiography, p. 195.

2. Cf., ibid., pp. 153-54. In this section I do not do justice at all to Mill's philosophy of social science, which is a great improvement on, and far more sophisticated than, that offered by Comte. However, as will be seen, it is only with the specific issue of the fact-value dichotomy and its political implications that concerns me here, for it is this issue which is at the core of the problems I am investigating in this thesis. In a thesis of this length it will have to suffice to say that Mill lays the 'proper' foundation for Comte's assertion that Sociology must be positivistic, analogous to the natural sciences, by his analysis of causality and its application to human affairs.

* I intend to discuss Mill only with reference to two of his works: the Autobiography (New American Library, 1964) and the System of Logic (8th edition, London, 1889). Mill's book Auguste Comte and Positivism (first published in 1865 in two issues of the Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review, but issued as a book the same year) is a quite stimulating account of Comte's views, generally favourable to the Cours, at times trenchantly critical of the Systeme. All of what I say regarding the Logic and the Autobiography can also be found in this book as well: e.g., for his 'practical' criticism of Comte's views on political action cf., pp. 314, 352. On his 'theoretical' criticism of Comte's views of the connection between the Laws of Social Science and the rules of right conduct or policy, cf., p. 326 (References are to J.S. Mill, Collected Works, X, ed. by J. Robson).

assertions about the relation of social science to political action; to these he objected on both practical and theoretical grounds.

On practical grounds, he violently objected to the explicit authoritarianism of Comte's political philosophy, to the suggestion that the scientists, because they alone were capable of ascertaining the correct answer, ought to rule society. It was for this reason that he was 'disappointed' by the fourth volume of the Cours. It is also to this aspect of Comte's Systeme de Politique Positive which Mill's now famous remark - "the completest system of spiritual and temporal despotism which ever yet emanated from a humain brain, unless possibly that of Ignatius Loyola"¹ - applies. His final judgment of this work expresses his 'practical' objections to Comte's views regarding the relationship between social science and political theory quite clearly:

the book stands as a monumental warning to thinkers on society and politics of what happens when once men lose sight in their speculations of the value of liberty and of individuality.²

But it is the theoretical grounds that Mill adduced for rejecting Comte's views about the relation of social science to political action that are of major importance for my purposes. For Mill drew a sharp separation between making an assertion of 'fact' and expressing a 'value' preference; and by so doing, he initiated a distinction that has by now become a cliché repeated by social scientists without much examination, interminably and unremittingly. However, before proceeding to examine what Mill said in these respects, and its relevance to the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences, it is necessary to back-track a bit and to make some observations on the fact-value question as represented in the thought of Comte.

1. Autobiography, p. 155; cf., his similar remarks in chapter 1 of On Liberty.

2. Ibid., p. 156.

Is it correct to assert, as it is often claimed, that Comte believed that statements of Fact and expressions of value are the same thing, or that they could be derived from one another? I doubt it. This distinction was a new one in the history of philosophy; Hume is generally credited with the honour in modern thought, and even that is by no means clear.¹ Thus, while Comte was writing, this was neither a common distinction nor a controversial issue with which he had to deal. It would probably be truer to say, therefore, that, precisely because he was not aware of the issue, he confused the distinction, and this primarily through inadvertance. There are two separate ways in which this can be seen; stated epigrammatically, one might say that he proposed descriptions which were in fact prescriptive, and he issued prescriptions which were nothing but disguised descriptions.

As to the latter, Comte believed that man sought to determine the causes of certain phenomena primarily in order to control their effects, or, if this proved impossible, in order to adapt himself to these effects. Implied in this belief is the assumption that what a man ought to do in a certain situation generally can be ascertained by knowing the nature of the situation; in other words, quite often there is a 'value' implicit in the facts of the situation.² 'Wise resignation' characterizes the scientific man, for he accepts the world as it is, without illusions or false hopes or aspirations, without criticism of what is necessitated by the very nature of things: he accepts that what ought to be can be nothing more than a statement of what truly is, and that to struggle against the

1. Cf., Alasdair MacIntyre, "Hume on 'Is' and 'Ought'," Philosophical Review, 1959.

2. "The office of science is, not to govern, but to modify phenomena; and to do this, it is necessary to understand their laws." Positive Philosophy, II, p. 79.

nature of things or against the state of civilization is futile. Thus Comte writes that, "in ascertaining what is to be the new system, it is necessary to put aside its advantages or disadvantages...to occupy our thoughts about the excellence of that system, would be to confuse everything and even to miss our goal."¹ The reason for this is that

inasmuch as the positive idea of goodness and that of harmony with the state of civilization are identical, we are certain to obtain the best system now attainable, if we discover that which is most in harmony with the present state of civilization.²

One arrives at the general proposition that "the idea of goodness (has) as a positive conception no separate existence, and (becomes) positive only when connected with the state of civilization."³

But Comte proceeds deeper than this. For it is his contention that this acceptance of the status quo - the true status quo, he would emphasize - as the source of right action is an attitude that men would adopt only in the positivistic stage. Science not only reveals to man how to acquire the things that he desires, but also what it is possible for him to acquire; it shows him not only how to get things, but also, in so doing, the situation that is the world in which men find themselves and the force of whose rules they have no choice but to accept. Science is important for it describes what man is able to do by his nature, or by what rules society must operate; in coming to accept the scientific attitude toward life, man learns that the correctness of his proposals

1. "The System of Positive Philosophy," System, IV, p. 565. This attitude characterizes Comte's conception of political action: "the action merely accelerates or extends a development which would have taken place without it. In politics, as in science, opportuneness is always the main condition of all great and durable action." Positive Philosophy, II, p. 79.

2. "The System of Positive Polity," System, IV, p. 565.

3. Ibid., p. 565.

for action rests on the truthfulness of his descriptions.

Perhaps this assumption was so easily accepted by Comte because he thought that he had isolated a factor which was, at the same moment, the principle of historical change and the principle of historical development, and thus one that could serve as an (intuitively obvious) norm of human morality.* In other words, Comte could more or less reduce prescriptions to (accurate) descriptions of the world not only for the reasons I have given, but also because of his conception of what a true description consisted. This leads to Comte's second confusion, namely, proposing as true descriptive propositions statements which were in fact prescriptive. Irony lies at the base of this confusion; for it rests on an error - the projection of subjective value into the world and then assuming it is really 'there' - that Comte would have consigned to the Metaphysical stage of thought.

As I have already remarked, Comte conceived of society as analogous to a body, and his work is littered with organic metaphors to describe the social system; and just as in medicine what is to be considered 'good' appears to be self-evident, so also for sociology. There can be no argument that health as a value is implicitly present in the search for the causes of organic disorders; deeply concerned at the disorders he witnessed in the post-Revolutionary, Industrializing society of nineteenth century France, Comte consequently assumed that 'smoothly running' or 'health' or 'Order and Progress' or 'optimally functioning' were values implicit in the operation of the social mechanism itself.**

* In fact, the Law of Progress was the statement of an historical fact for Comte.

** Just as 'Law' was felt to be 'in' the world somehow. Cf., his discussion of the relationship between biological Classifications and Nature. Positive Philosophy, II, pp. 124-126. For all of this cf., ibid., II, pp. 62-63 "The Spirit of Social Science."

Comte thought he had discerned laws of function that, if they were disobeyed, would result in the malfunctioning of the system, and thus were ignored only at society's peril. Thus, in discovering how the mechanism of society and its parts worked and were interrelated, one was simultaneously 'discovering' the rules by which it ought to be governed.

It is this dual confusion between descriptions and prescriptions that permitted Comte to advocate that political policy be formulated and decided by the savans; and it is this Sociocracy to which his thought led that Mill rejected. Mill did so not only on the practical grounds already mentioned, but, more importantly, on the theoretical grounds that Comte had failed to make a distinction between science and art. In so arguing, Mill clarified the confusion I have been describing.

This attack is to be found in the System of Logic, Book VI, Chapter XII. There Mill distinguished art, by which he meant morals and politics as well as aesthetics, from science on the basis that "whatever speaks in rules or precepts, not in assertions respecting matters of fact, is art."¹ It is art which "has one first principle or general major premise not borrowed from science, that which enunciates the object aimed at and affirms it to be a desirable object;"² and this is the case because "a proposition of which the predicate is expressed by the word ought or should be is generically different from one which is expressed by is or will be."³ "The propositions of science assert a matter of fact: an existence, a coexistence, a succession, or a resemblance," whereas the propositions of art "do not assert that anything is, but enjoin or

1. System of Logic, VI, Chapter XII, pp. 353-4.

2. Ibid., p. 355.

3. Ibid., p. 355.

recommend that something should be. They are in a class by themselves."¹

It is on the basis of this logical distinction that Mill makes the following important statement which fundamentally separates his conception of the political usefulness of social science from that of Comte, a separation which makes the social scientist less than a saviour-director and more of an engineer carrying out orders according to criteria of efficiency:

A scientific reasoner or observer, merely as such, is not an advisor for practice. His part is only to show that certain consequences follow from certain causes and that, to obtain certain ends, certain means are the most effectual. Whether the ends themselves are such as ought to be pursued, and if so, in what cases and to how great a length, it is no part of his business as a cultivator of science to decide, and science alone will never qualify him for that decision.²

Thus, by drawing the distinction between science and art, Mill introduced into the mainstream of the empiricist tradition two influential ideas. One has to do with the nature of social theory: it is the well-known fact-value dichotomy, with the attendant corollary that all science, including social science, only produces objective facts, and is incompetent to decide questions of value; the theories of the social sciences are purely factual theories. The other influential idea has to do with the relationship between social science and policy-making that results from the fact-value dichotomy; this is the means-ends schema which separates the decision-making process into two categories: the question of ends, i.e. the direction policy ought to pursue (this is a question of subjective values); and the question of means which arises only after the ends have been established, i.e. the most efficient procedures to effect the given ends (this is a question of objective fact). It is the politician who decides the former; but it is the social

1. Ibid., p. 355.

2. Ibid., p. 356.

scientist, with his objective, impersonal, scientific system of explanations, who is the only person competent to decide the latter. This is Mill's legacy.

2.4.2 A Note on Modern Empiricism

In a thesis of greater length it would now be appropriate to discuss the progress of Empiricism subsequent to Mill; however, in terms of the theory and political role of the doctrine of ethical neutrality, such an undertaking would add little to what I have already said. The distinction between fact and value, the identification of social science with the factual side of the coin, and the consequent engineering role it is hoped social scientists will play in political life have indeed become contemporary cliches repeated over and over again interminably.*

Broadly, this piece of conventional wisdom asserts that the methods of natural science, the methods of impersonal observation resulting in an explanatory system of laws of regularity, is appropriate to the social affairs of men as well. Indeed, it is asserted that it is this method alone which results in indisputable facts about man's social arrangements, indisputable because verifiable by anyone regardless of his personal convictions. These facts are free from the interference of the distorting values which divide men and which cause the disorders which characterize their social life; they are objectively true, convincing despite one's hopes or aspirations, true whether one likes them or not. Of course, precisely because science is confined to uttering statements of fact,

* Of all the innumerable books and articles in which these sentiments may be found, the most lucid and powerful seem to me to be Lady Barbara Wootton's Testament for Social Science (London, 1950) and George Lundberg's Can Science Save Us? (New York, 1947). These two works are much quoted in the literature.

and precisely because it is unpolluted with value judgments, it cannot, by the same token, logically entail that one preference rather than another ought to follow as a result of its findings. Facts and values are separated by a logical gulf, and are therefore absolutely independent of one another.

But one should not infer from this that science can only contribute trivial or isolated bits of statistical information to the decision-making process; on the contrary, once one has decided what he wishes to do, all the subsequent questions concerning the means one ought to adopt in order to achieve this goal are technical questions, i.e. questions soluble in terms of the application of scientific principles. Thus, social science, in so far as it discovers the laws according to which society operates, is an absolutely invaluable tool with respect to questions of how the goals which society has decided to pursue can be achieved. Moreover, if it is true - as many social scientists assert - that because of science itself man has succeeded in extending the area amenable to technical solutions and thereby reduced the area in which private, speculative, merely subjective opinion is appropriate, then the role of social science is correspondingly larger. And if it is true that men, once they learn the true nature of society from science, will cease to demand ends which are not satisfiable because of the nature of things, and will also, at least in many cases, cease to yearn after mutually exclusive ends, then the fundamentally difficult political questions that do remain will almost all be amenable to scientific analysis. Lastly, the implementation of a scientific solution to the problem of means is itself a neutral undertaking; the means to the end derives its value from the end sought. Science may be used for good or for ill; in itself, it is neutral.

Social science is indeed critical for politics. It changes the nature of much, if not all, of political argument, making it technical and therefore soluble; it presses the scientific expert to the fore, at last establishing authority on the grounds of competence and expertise rather than on the purely arbitrary basis of heredity, rhetorical ability, wealth, or demagogic power. Thus, much of political life will be transformed into a rational activity in which policy is decided on explicit, objective, impartial criteria of efficiency. And in accomplishing this transformation, the social scientist will act as the instrument by which man will control his own affairs, as surely as his brother natural scientist plays the same role in modern technological society. When that time comes, a new period in man's history will dawn, for through the manipulative powers, gained as a result of this scientific knowledge, and it alone, man will achieve the satisfaction of his desires, material and social, and consequently the happiness for which he longs. All of this today has become commonplace.

2.5 Functionalism

2.5.1 Emile Durkheim*

Saint Simon conceived of social physiology as primarily an historical exercise; and while Comte divided sociology into two separate undertakings

* I intend to discuss Durkheim only with respect to his explicitly methodological work: The Rules of the Sociological Method; and the articles collected under the title: Sociology and Philosophy. In terms of his substantive contributions, Durkheim is, of course, eminently important as an anthropologist (cf., especially The Elementary Forms of Religious Life), as a sociologist (cf. especially Suicide), and as a social theorist (especially in the Division of Labour; Socialism; and Professional Ethics and Civic Morals). In the last named role, he develops the line of thought associated with Saint Simon and Comte, namely, the transformation of man's society into an industrial society and the problems which thereby ensue. Most of the abstractions which one finds in his methodological writings are here graphically and concretely expressed and many of the observations which I attributed to Saint Simon one finds here in a more elaborate and researched manner. He continues what might be called the 'Organization School' of Industrial society.

the static (which "consists in the investigation of the laws of action and reaction of the different parts of the social system"¹), and the dynamic (whose task is to uncover the laws of historical development²), he in fact emphasized social dynamics almost to the denigration of social statics. For both of these theorists, sociology meant 'scientific' history. Moreover, this conception had an important implication for social policy: for the purpose of sociology thus was to enlighten legislators and political executives as to the general direction which society would take in the future; and its political function was to elucidate the kinds of policies which would make this determined course smoother. General prognoses rather than specific proposals were generally to be the result.

Modern sociology and political science have both repudiated this emphasis. They have de-historicized social science, deflating its scope and content so that its concern has become the institutions of a given society, usually modern industrial society. Social science consists of concrete analysis of social processes, buttressed by detailed empirical research, rather than analyzing the nature of historical evolution. In the history of sociological theory, this alteration in the object of analysis was effected by, among others, Comte's successor³ in France, Emile Durkheim.⁴

1. The Positive Philosophy, II, p. 63.

2. Cf., ibid., II, pp. 67-70.

3. Durkheim categorizes himself in this way. In the preface to the Rules he says that prior to him "a chapter in the Cours de philosophie positive is, then, almost the only original and important study we have on the matter (of methodology)", p. lix. He is referring to Comte's remarks on social statics. By successor I do not mean, of course, disciple. There are many methodological and substantive differences between them.

4. E.g., cf., Rules, p. 88n.

But Durkheim is not only important for contributing to this change in emphasis in the concerns of social science. He is far more significant for narrowing and refining Comte's methodological observations, resulting in a body of reflections explicitly devoted to a discussion of the kinds of scientific explanation appropriate to the social sciences. My interest in Durkheim is focussed here, and, more particularly, on his remarks that led to the development of functionalism.* I am interested in this aspect of his thought not only because it introduces another kind of supposedly scientific explanation with which I must deal in the analytic section of this thesis; I am also interested because Durkheim's functionalism is intimately related to the somewhat peculiar statements he made about the relation of fact and value, and to the interesting role in modern society which he conceived the sociologist as fulfilling. Deriving from and dependent on his methodological analyses, these two aspects of his thought, which are directly relevant to my concerns, must thus be understood in terms of his methodology.

There are two theses in the Rules which are fundamental to Durkheim's conception of sociology: the first is that sociology is a science; the other is that sociology is a separate self-contained science, and, more particularly, that it is not reducible to psychology. In fact, the entire book may be conceived of as an elaboration of what is involved in proposing these tenets and an analysis of the implications which result from them. In general, the first thesis is the product of Durkheim's scientific empiricism; the second thesis rests on his celebrated notion of the social fact. I am more interested in the latter; however, a few remarks concerning the former are appropriate.

* A development which, as I have shown, is implicitly present in Comte.

Durkheim believed that the unscientific, subjective view of the world, one which is characterized by uncritical acceptance of one's own opinions and preferences as if they were true reality, in which one treats subjective concepts as if they were objective beings, continued even in Comte's sociology, even though Comte was expressly aware of this error of thought, and indeed had explicitly defined progress in human knowledge in terms of its elimination. Durkheim thought this was the case because Comte assigned the history of ideas to be the subject matter of his science; and, more importantly, because he predicted his entire explanatory edifice on the assumption that there is a continuous evolution of the human species towards a fulfillment of human nature.¹ Durkheim also condemned Spenser² and economics in the same terms.³ His concluding judgment of Spenser is equally applicable to the other two: "the facts accumulated in his sociology seem to function principally as arguments, since they are employed to illustrate analyses of concepts rather than to describe and explain things."⁴

The lesson Durkheim draws from this situation is one he acknowledges to have learned from Bacon:⁵ "We must, therefore, consider social phenomena in themselves as distinct from the consciously formed representations of them in the mind; we must study them objectively as external things."⁶ It is these considerations which serve as the background for Durkheim's first and most famous rule: consider social facts as things. What is implied in this rule may be perceived in the three corollaries that he

1. Rules, pp. 18-20.

2. Rules, pp. 20-21.

3. Rules, pp. 23-27. Ironically, so does Comte. Cf., The Positive Philosophy, II, pp. 50-53.

4, 5, & 6 Rules, pp. 21, 17, 28 respectively.

deduces from it:¹ (1) employ only scientific concepts in the selection and explanation of problems, thereby eliminating vague emotional words and subjective expressions of sentiment; (2) define problems in terms of externally verifiable characteristics, thereby removing any personal arbitrariness in one's classification of data; (3) consider social processes and institutions independently of their individual manifestations, thereby aiding one to be impartial in his analysis. One must examine social phenomena from the outside, as an external and impartial observer, refusing to permit personal feeling or belief to enter one's descriptions.

In admonishing the natural scientist to employ this objective, impartial attitude Bacon was quite clear as to what objects he thought it ought to apply; after all, trees and horses and stars are visible, physically present and spatially separate. But the problem is not so simple when one so exhorts the would-be social scientist. Indeed, even in his primary rule of the sociological method, Durkheim felt constrained to use a novel, and, as it happened, an unclear and controversial term, namely, 'social fact.' This term provides a good introduction to Durkheim's second assertion regarding social science - that it is a separate science not reducible to psychology; for in elucidating the meaning of this term one also elucidates Durkheim's notion of the object which sociology examines. To what does the term refer?

A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations.²

1. Rules, pp. 31-46.

2. Rules, p. 13.

Contrary to some interpreters, Durkheim is not positing here the existence of some occult agency invisibly lurking behind individual men;¹ rather, he is proposing a kind of relational realism in which the presence of other people intimately affects and influences the ways in which one acts and feels and thinks. He refers to 'things,' not in the sense of temporally existing units unfortunately imperceptible, but to the styles of behaviour, the norms of right conduct, the conventions inherent in social arrangements which one inherits from other men, learns and wills to others; he is describing myths, law codes, mores, languages, national ideals, and economic and social procedures. Sociology studies the patterns of social action, how they arise, how they are organized into institutions, how they maintain themselves, and how they exert force on the individual members of a given society.

Moreover, following the organicist tradition initiated by Saint Simon at the very inception of social science, Durkheim rejected the notion that society is merely the sum of a number of separate individuals; and in line with this, he thus conceived of social facts, not as isolated structures external to the particular members and individually exerting a coercive influence on them, but rather as linked together in a systematic way, forming a harmonious integrated whole. In the world of living beings, "the whole is not identical with the sum of its parts. It is something different, and its properties differ from those of its component parts;"² it is the association itself which produces the new phenomenon called society. Consequently, it is in the social structure itself that the sociologist must search for the evidence to build his

1. Cf., Rules, pp. 103-4 and 103n.

2. Rules, p. 102.

theories which purport to explain not only other social facts but individual actions as well.¹

Thus, the social scientist attempts to understand the organized structure of social facts which determine, in large part, the ways in which men think and act. But in this attempt at understanding, there are only certain kinds of explanation which are appropriate, i.e. which will be both scientific and germane to the subject matter. For Durkheim there are two types of sociological explanation: one, which all the empiricists before and after him advocate, is causal; it explains how a social institution arose, and how it came to adopt the particular form it has assumed. Here the sociologist attempts to explain a social fact by reference to other social facts, or a peculiar cluster of them. The other type of explanation is functional; it explains why it is that a social system is able to maintain itself, or why a specific social institution or practice continues to exist. By functional, therefore, is meant useful to the social whole; it is not to be confused with purpose or intention, which would imply that an institution was rationally created in order to fulfill a perceived need. A social fact can become functional only after it has been instituted; a functional explanation tells us how a social practice or arrangement remains viable amid constant social change. Therefore, the sociologist

must determine whether there is a correspondence between the fact under consideration and the general needs of the social organism, and in what this correspondence consists, without occupying ourselves with whether it has been intentional or not.²

1. This is the theme of Rules, pp. 97-124.

2. Rules, p. 95.

One may broadly summarize Durkheim's notion of sociological explanation by saying that a system of causal and functional explanatory theories conceives of a specific social fact as system-determined on the one hand, and system-maintaining on the other.*

At this juncture I propose to inquire how these specifically methodological observations by Durkheim relate to his conception of the nature of values; in particular, I want to demonstrate that from his remarks regarding the nature of sociological explanation one can derive his theory of value. In general, in the language of the preceding summary formula, Durkheim's point is that moral values - which are a social fact - can be explained both as system-determined, i.e. caused by other social facts, and as system-maintaining, i.e. can be derived from what is useful to the continuing life of society. The former explanation results from Durkheim's empiricism, and is to be found most explicitly in his important essay "Value Judgments and Judgments of Reality;" the latter explanation derives from his functionalism, and is to be found in his remarks in the Rules regarding the 'normal' and the 'pathological.'

According to Durkheim, there is a type of judgment which is neither as assertion of fact, because it reveals one's own reaction to these

* Precisely because a functional explanation demands a coherent picture of various social systems, sociological morphology, i.e. the classification of social types, becomes an important part of the sociological enterprise (cf., Rules, pp. 78-88). Moreover, this implies some kind of comparative method. The upshot of this is that what Durkheim calls 'correlation' is a method most suited for sociology; this is a procedure whereby specific occurrences are related to specific social systems (cf. Rules, pp. 125-37). I mention this, not only as an indication of how Durkheim's other methodological rules are related to his central conception of function, but also because it reinforces a line of thought which I first mentioned while discussing Comte. This is the line which asserts that science does not consist simply in the accumulation of observed regular recurrences, but it must also propound explanatory hypotheses which fit into a system of explanation, and it must make verifiable predictions which result from this systematic theory. (Cf., Rules, pp. 136-140).

facts, nor simply a value judgment, because it contains more than a simple declaration of preference. This type of judgment is characterized by the fact that "I attribute to the people or things in question an objective character quite independent of my own feelings."¹ In these statements one communicates his convictions of what is right; thus,

We try to demonstrate their validity by supporting them with impersonal arguments. Implicitly we recognize that these judgments correspond to some objective reality upon which agreement can and should be reached. These sui generis realities constitute values, and it is to these realities that value judgments refer.²

The question about values is transformed, therefore, into the question, what are these judgments and what is their source?

Durkheim contends, for reasons that are not relevant here, that neither naturalism,³ which accounts for the 'objective' quality of these subjective expressions by locating values in the objects which one encounters, nor idealism,⁴ which supposes that man possesses a faculty which transcends experience and which creates ideals, can provide an adequate account of such moral values. However, "since ideals and their corresponding value systems vary with various human groups, does this not suggest a collective origin for both?"⁵ In Durkheim's opinion, this is the very heart of the matter: for society "is the centre of a moral life."⁶ "When individual minds are not isolated but enter into a close relation with and work upon each other, from this synthesis arises

1. Sociology and Philosophy, p. 81.

2. Ibid., p. 81.

3. Cf., Ibid., p. 82-87.

4. Cf., ibid., p. 87-90.

5. Ibid., p. 90.

6. Ibid., p. 91.

a new kind of psychic life."¹ These are moments of great flowing intensity:

it is, in fact, at such moments of collective ferment that there are born the great ideals upon which civilizations rest....If man conceives ideals, and indeed cannot help conceiving and becoming attached to them, it is because he is a social being. Society moves or forces the individual to rise above himself and gives him the means for achieving this.²

In fact, in 'great moments' of civilization these ideals are actually being lived in social interaction, and at other times they remain on in social memory, periodically recalled in ceremonies, constantly invoked as norms by which to judge the actions of a society's members.

Thus, "these ideals are simply the ideas in terms of which society sees itself and exists at a culminating point in its development."³ Science itself reveals that moral values are, at bottom, merely the transfiguration of society: "in a word, society substitutes for the world revealed to us by our senses, a different world that is the projection of the ideals created by society itself."⁴ Specific moral rules and judgments common to the community and which individual members hold are determined by the kind of social structure of that community; the norms of individuals by which they guide their lives are by no means wholly or even substantially their own creation, but are caused by the social environment in which they live.*

Moreover, this view of moral values - which today is a quite commonly held view - derives from his methodological empiricism; for in attempting to view social reality as a system of social facts to be apprehended from

1, & 2. Ibid., p. 91.

3. Ibid., p. 94.

4. Ibid., p. 95.

* In the Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Durkheim was to make precisely the same point, substituting 'religion' for where here he discusses 'morality.'

the outside and accepted as simply 'present,' it is necessary to search for the determinant of specific social practices in the social structure itself.* As a result of his methodology, Durkheim can only view the system of moral norms from the viewpoint of an observer, approaching it as an objective environment which impinges on the individual's choices, itself the product of the social structure which results from the interaction of men living and working together through time. Moral values are socially determined; and this assertion follows quite naturally from the sociological empiricism which marks Durkheim's methodology.

The other examination of moral values which Durkheim provides in his methodological writings appears in his endeavour in the Rules to distinguish between two types of social fact, "those which conform to given standards and those which 'ought' to be different - in other words, normal and pathological phenomena."¹ The locus of this endeavour is that, since society is an organized system of interrelated social institutions and conventions ('facts'), it follows that, in terms of the factual situation of the system itself, a criterion for deciding such a question is implied:

for societies as for individuals health is good and desirable: disease, on the contrary, is bad and to be avoided. If, then, we can find an objective criterion, inherent in facts themselves, which enables us to distinguish scientifically between health and morbidity in various orders of social phenomena, science will be in a position to throw light on practical problems and still remain faithful to its method.²

In this one remark the developments of two hundred years are brought to a culmination.

* It is appropriate to recall his rule: "The determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it and not among the states of the individual consciousness." Rules, p. 110.

1. Rules, p. 47.

2. Ibid., p. 49.

After some analysis, which is not relevant here, Durkheim discovers this criterion of health in terms of the frequency of occurrence of a social practice in a given social condition;¹ this results in the first rule regarding social normality and pathology:

A social fact is normal, in relation to a given social type at a given phase of its development, when it is present in the average society of that species at the corresponding phase of its evolution.²

However, this does not imply that the scientist simply records the frequency of a social fact and compares it with its frequency in other times and in other, similar societies. Quite obviously societies change, and what is normal at one time may become pathological³ or merely redundant⁴ at another; furthermore, there may exist types of societies for which, because they are caught in the throes of transition from one type to another, one cannot determine what is normal and what is pathological. It is at this point that the necessity and relevance of functional explanation is manifest; for these difficulties can be solved only if "one can erect this (observed) normality of fact into a normality by logical necessity,"⁵ i.e. if one can explain why the fact is normal in terms of the function it fulfills in the maintenance of the life of the social organism. Thus, the second rule for deciding whether a social fact is normal or pathological depends on and derives from the nature of functionalistic explanation:

1. Cf., p. 55.

2. p. 64.

3. Cf., p. 57.

4. Cf., p. 60.

5. p. 59.

one can verify the results of the preceding method by showing that the generality of the phenomena is bound up with the general conditions of collective life of the social type considered.¹

From the objective, impersonal procedures of the social scientist flow functional explanations of social conventions, institutions, mores and ideals, and all the other facts that comprise the social system; from these explanations derive judgments of what is normal and what is not for a specific society: a scientific criterion of health emerges.²

These two treatments of the theory of value, the one which claims that moral rules are the result of social structure, the other which asserts that the criterion for ascribing moral value is that which is functional to the social system, both lead to the same conclusion, namely, that values are an expression of the requirements needed for the life and stability of the social system, and that their function is to provide the common element which binds men together and ensures social integration. The social order is unthinkable apart from a system of shared and mutually recognized values which reinforce those other cohesive structures which arise when men work and live together. In fact, morality is based, and ought to be so in moral arguments, on those factors which hold society together and will continue to do so in the future.

Obviously, this conception of values - one which evolves quite naturally from Durkheim's methodology - has a direct significance for the questions in which I am specifically interested. On the theoretical side, it is relevant to any discussion of the relationship between

1. p. 64.

2. "The principal object of all sciences of life, whether natural or social, is to define and explain the normal state and to distinguish it from its opposite." Rules, p. 74.

factual statements and value judgments; on the practical side, it bears directly on the question of the relationship between Durkheim's conception of sociology and political affairs.

In Durkheim's view, what he calls judgments of reality and judgments of value are essentially similar:

...there is no difference in nature. A value expresses the relation of a thing to an ideal. The ideal is, like the thing, a given reality itself of a different order. The relation expressed unites two given terms as in a judgment of reality.¹

Another way of stating this is that "a value judgment, then, adds to the given fact in a sense, even though what is added has been borrowed from another fact of a different order."² The 'fact of a different order' is, of course, a social fact, as compared with the facts of the natural world, a social fact scientifically apprehended by the sociologist.

There are two important provisos which one must append to this theoretical formulation of the nature of value judgments. In the first place, it must not be inferred from this that it is just any member of a society who is able to apprehend its moral requirements; nor are these requirements to be identified simply with the prevailing climate of moral opinion. Indeed, it is only the sociologist, who proceeds in a prescribed, impartial manner according to the canons of the scientific method, who is capable of such insight:

the society that morality bids us desire is not the society as it appears to itself, but the society as it is or is really becoming It is possible that opinion, weighed down by survivals, lags behind the real condition of society....The science of morality will allow us to rectify these errors.³

1. Sociology and Philosophy, p. 95.

2. Ibid., p. 96.

3. Ibid., p. 38.

The other proviso which one must make concerning Durkheim's conception of morality is that, whereas individuals or philosophers might argue interminably, the only result being an extension of confusion with no recognized, neutral arbiter to clarify the problems or to indicate the way to arrive at a conclusion, the sociologist alone can provide answers.¹ The reason for this is that

we have here an objective standard with which to compare our evaluations. The reason which is the judge on all these matters is not the individual reason, subject as it is to all sorts of private aspirations and personal preferences, but the reason supported by the methodical observation of a given reality, the social reality.²

These theoretical observations have enormous pertinence to the questions of politics, i.e. questions of who shall be in authority, whom shall they govern, how shall they decide what policy to follow, and how these decisions should be enforced. One should expect that this would be the case; for, as one can witness in all of his writings, but especially in his substantive work, what interested, nay, obsessed, Durkheim was the crises in modern society of social disintegration engendered by the weakness of the ties which bind the individual to the group. Indeed, it was this obsession which informed his entire sociology, and which directed him to examine such questions as the division of labour in an industrial society, suicide, anomie, etc.³ From his remarks on the nature of morality and the nature of value

1. The first conclusion which Durkheim draws from his Rules is the removal of philosophy from sociology. Cf., Rules, pp. 141-3.

2. Ibid., p. 62.

3. In an essay of greater length, it would be appropriate to relate his methodological views on sociology to his whole theory of modern society, as I did when discussing Saint Simon. But precisely because Durkheim, and later theorists, are more sophisticated and self-conscious about methodology, it is only with this I concern myself.

judgments it is obvious that it is to the science of society to which one must turn when those integrative elements of social cohesion no longer hold sway over men; as with Saint Simon and Comte, but with a great deal more subtlety, for Durkheim sociology was to become the source of the new morality.¹ It is this desire which was the guiding object of his methodological admonitions: "Our constant preoccupation has been to orient it so that it might have practical results."²

It is ironic that this activist, rationalistic attitude engenders what Comte as well as Durkheim called a sense of resignation, a kind of acceptance of the reality of both nature and natural laws as well as society and its laws. This resignation stems not only from the kind of reality which sociology discovers to be characteristic of man's social arrangements and institutions, their complexity, their interrelatedness, the conservatism of traditional relationships, their roots in habitual customs, manners and roles; this resignation also stems - and this is of more interest to me - from the kind of knowledge sociology provides, its objectivity, its independence, its neutrality. One no longer will wish to dispute the political pronouncements of authority as little more than ideological covers for self-interest or private gain; one no longer will care to object to the assessments and proposals of political commentators or leaders on the grounds that they are, at best, interested half-

1. To a comment by M. Darly on his article 'The Determination of Moral Facts,' Durkheim retorted: "In the same way that the natural sciences permit us to manipulate the material with which they deal, so the science of moral facts puts us in a position to order and direct the course of moral life." Sociology and Philosophy, p. 65, cf., ibid., p. 96.

2. Rules, p. 13. Cf., Rules, pp. 47-8; in the preface he states that "our principle objective is to extend scientific rationalism to human behaviour." Rules, p. xxxix.

truths subject to attack on grounds that they include subjective valuations, personal preferences, emotional beliefs and hopes and fears about the human condition. The disorder and the disruption, which is caused by the very nature of political problems and the inherently contradictory plans spawned by men attempting to impose their vision on the world of what is right or advantageous, will subside in so far as these problems are soluble by scientific procedures, and in so far as these procedures result in an objective, testable, secure knowledge which coerces men into submission before the weight of the factual reality which it reveals.

Durkheim writes in his Preface to the Second Edition:

In vain have repeated experiences taught him that this omnipotence, the illusion of which he complacently entertains, has always been a cause of weakness in him; that this power over things really began only when he recognized that they have a nature of their own and resigned himself to learning this nature from them. Rejected by all other sciences, this deplorable prejudice stubbornly maintains itself in sociology.¹

It is the quality of neutrality which is one root of this resignation; it is also the quality which will demarcate old style political argument from that of the new era when it finally appears. With the arrival of a mature social science, answers

will be derived from facts and not from emotions; (thus) one can foresee that they must be formulated for the sociologist in quite other terms than for the masses, and that the tentative solutions it can give them could not coincide exactly with any of those which now satisfy various interest groups. But the role of sociology from this point of view must properly consist in emancipating us from all parties....²

A new arbiter appears, one that establishes criteria for judging political questions that all men, regardless of their political values or personal opinions, will be able to accept; Durkheim is the prophet of this new

1. Rules, p. lviii.

2. Ibid., p. 143.

age, this salvation of politics, effected through the removal of the passionate, involved aspirations and interests that mar political debate and subject it to the whims of idiosyncrasy and irrationality:

The time has come for sociology...to assume the exacting character befitting every science....For so long as it remains involved in partisan struggles, is content to expound common ideas with/^{no}more logic than the laymen, and, consequently, presumes no special competence, it has no right to speak loudly enough to silence passions and prejudices. Assuredly, the time when it will be able to play this role successfully is still far off. However, we must begin to work now....¹

Sociology will transform the very nature of government. By this is meant not only that sociology will bring into prominence certain areas of social life as pivotal for social management - areas of which statesmen in the past have often neglected or have even been unaware (especially the ideational elements^{*}) - thereby downgrading the traditional political mechanisms as somewhat superfluous, and focussing attention on intermediate institutions like the corporation as instruments for social control; sociology will also transform government in the more fundamental sense of radically altering the very nature of politics. The expressly political will be transformed into the scientific, and it will be through scientific calculation, rather than persuasion of personal commitment or subjective interest, that society will be governed; it is this shift in the methods of government, irrespective of the substantive changes this might entail, that represents the deepest core of Durkheim's conception of the role that sociology will play in man's affairs. Moreover, it

1. Rules, p. 146.

* It is these which led to Durkheim's interest in educational theory, and his conception of it as essentially a political/social undertaking. Cf., in general, his two essays, "Education: Its Role and Nature" and "The Nature and Method of Pedagogy." For its political relevance, cf., especially pp. 79; 133-4; 142 in the collection Education and Sociology.

is precisely the ethically neutral character of the new science that is the means whereby this transformation can be effected. I will end my discussion of Durkheim with his words:

It is no longer a matter of pursuing desperately an objective that retreats as one advances, but of working with steady perseverance to maintain the normal state, of re-establishing it if it is threatened, and of rediscovering its conditions if they have changed. The duty of the statesman is no longer to push society toward an ideal that seems attractive to him, but his role is that of the physician: he prevents the outbreak of illnesses by good hygiene, and he seeks to cure them when they have appeared.¹

2.5.2 The Development of Functionalism

Functionalism, as a fully explicit system of explanation for the social sciences which explains social institutions and practices in terms of social structure, reached its maturity only in the work of Durkheim's direct descendant, A.R. Radcliffe-Browne.² As with all theories, functionalism contains its own special problems and peculiar difficulties, thereby giving rise to theorists who comment on the issues, and a self-conscious tradition of discourse. Fortunately, because I am not interested here in the logical problems of scientific explanations, these developments in the theory of functionalism are not at the moment germane. It is sufficient for my purposes to have described the essentials of functional explanation as found in the thought of Durkheim, and to observe that in contemporary social science this is a generally accepted mode of explanation in the social sciences.³

1. Rules, p. 75, italics mine.

2. Cf., 'On the Concept of Function in Social Science,' in Structure and Function in Primitive Society (Free Press; Glencoe, Ill., 1952). For his acknowledgement of Durkheim as his immediate predecessor, cf., ibid., p. 178. In terms of a general theory, his best work is in the posthumous book A Natural Science of Society; in terms of the issues raised in this essay, cf., especially Chs. 1, 2, 3, 6 and pp. 128-40.

3. Cf., the bibliography on the trend towards functionalism in Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Practice, enlarged edition, (New York, 1968), p. 101.

However, there has occurred one series of debates that is of direct concern here; this has to do with the supposedly ideological taint which destroys the ethically neutral quality of functionalism, and, in particular, the criticism that functionalism encourages or reflects a conservative bias. The basis of this charge is that, by concentrating on the harmonious relationships between different parts of the social system, functionalism assumes that each system is functioning optimally; in other words, that by analyzing the conditions of order sociology reflects a predilection for such order, and that its theories can thus be attacked on ideological as well as scientific grounds.

I do not want, at this point, to enter this argument directly: this will be appropriate only in the analytical section of this thesis. But it is necessary to report that recent social theorists have used three arguments against this assertion which, by and large, seem to represent the consensus of contemporary thought. The first reply is that, just because a theory encourages a specific course of action, this is irrelevant to assessing whether the theory is the result of a correct method of inquiry. Presumably any truth about the world, including the truths discovered by ethically neutral natural sciences, results in such a situation. In Percy Cohen's words, expressing the same thought from the opposite viewpoint: "If a theory has implications which are considered undesirable or unpalatable this should lead one to alter one's notions of how to achieve the desirable, not to a rejection of the theory."¹

The second reply, provided by Robert Merton,² is that functionalism

1. Modern Social Theory, p. 58.

2. Cf., Social Theory and Social Practice, pp. 91-100.

may just as well reflect a revolutionary bias. For if all aspects of social life are interdependent, then the only plausible means for effecting social reform would be a total transformation of society. One's interest in social order may reflect a conservative bias, or it may reflect a revolutionary one; but in neither case does it follow that one's theories are 'tainted' by such bias.

The third reply seems decisive.¹ For if one provides an account of how a society functions and persists in its present form, it certainly does not follow simply from this that one thereby justifies this society or any of its institutions. If an explanation of a particular practice is given in terms of the function it plays in the total pattern of life which characterises a specific society, this does not mean that one is committed to holding that the survival of this society or this practice, still less its survival at all costs, is of primary value or even desirable - this is another conclusion which would require further argument. Thus, one may explain witchcraft as functional to a certain society without thereby asserting that the society ought or ought not to continue to exist, or that one approves or disapproves of witchcraft; these further assertions would indeed be moral judgments, but it is only at this point that the personal values of the scientist intrude.

This discussion of the possible ideological bias of functionalism leads into the last point I wish to make; this has to do with Durkheim's theory of value: for, quite obviously, as it stands it does not represent the thinking of the typical modern theorist. For Durkheim maintained that from his scientific description of society's needs he could logically infer prescriptions about what individuals or political leaders ought to

1. For a clear presentation of this, cf., S.F. Nadel, Anthropology and Modern Life (Australian National University, 1953), pp. 17-21.

do; and that, as a result, he could scientifically judge what the ultimate ends of social policy ought to be.¹ This contention itself rests on his further assertion that a 'judgment of value' is really only a disguised 'judgment of fact,' i.e. that values are nothing more than an expression of the ideal requirements of the social order. To all of this the modern theorist might well agree that, as a matter of fact, value judgements are nothing more than expressions of preference determined by one's social environment; however, he would also maintain that, in order for the scientist to derive prescriptions from any description of what in fact the social ideals are, he himself must have made the factually unsupportable judgment that what society or its leaders proclaim as right he himself will accept as right. In other words, the modern theorist would argue, to accept as a criterion of what is good the values implicit in one's social order is itself to make a value judgment.

However, once this logical point is granted, and one then does adopt this value-standard - as Durkheim thinks it will be by most people, as a matter of fact - Durkheim's analysis then becomes quite easy to agree with: for having accepted social convention as a criterion of value, the scientist must then quite naturally proceed to determine what precisely these conventions are. The upshot of this is that it is not ends which the scientist as scientist prescribes, but the means to the ends set by society and accepted as such by the scientist himself. Once the conventionally accepted distinction between facts and values is introduced into Durkheim's thought, while it becomes obviously something quite different from what he intended, it plausibly represents

1. Cf., Rules, pp. 47-49; Education and Sociology, pp. 99-102.

a certain strand in modern social theory often associated with functionalism. As with the developments in empiricism after Comte, so with the developments in functionalism after Durkheim: the social scientist is no longer conceived as a saviour of society determining in an objective and rational manner the ends of social policy; he rather becomes more like an engineer, a bit deflated but still eminently important, determining the most efficient way to achieve ends decided on other grounds.

3. The Weberian Tradition

"The 'world' is not rational, but it is the task of science to rationalize it. 'Society' is not rational but it is the task of the social engineer to rationalize it."

Karl Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, II, p. 357
(4th edition).

3.1 Foundations: the Hypothetico-Deductive Conception of Science

Whereas the roots of the empiricist tradition are to be found in the epistemological empiricism situated in England and France, the genesis of what I intend to call the Weberian tradition is the epistemological idealism located in Germany, deriving especially from Immanuel Kant.¹ Upon this fundamental difference rests the variance of these two traditions in their conception of the nature of science; furthermore, this variance in turn leads to quite dissimilar notions of the scope and method of the social sciences; and ultimately, as I shall be concerned to show, these dissimilar notions result in distinctive views regarding the ethical neutrality of the social sciences and the consequent role they ought to play in political affairs.

The fundamental difference with regard to their respective conceptions of the nature of science revolves around the role preconceptions are thought to play in theory construction.* As I have already shown,

1. Cf., Weber, Methodology of the Social Sciences, p. 106.

* There is also a difference in emphasis on the proposed role theory ought to play in scientific knowledge. The idealist asserts at the outset that all mature scientific knowledge is theoretical; that in and of themselves facts, or an inventory of facts, or facts related into a singular generalization, do not enable us to explain an event: they must be ordered in some systematic way to result in generalized interrelated statements applicable to large numbers of particular cases. However, as I have noted in several places, since Comte and Durkheim recognized this aspect of the importance of theory, it is not necessary to pursue it any further. It is relevant against those whom Comte called 'brute empiricists,' who, unfortunately, seem to have dominated much of the social sciences, especially in America. In this respect, cf., Edward Shils' monograph, The Present State of American Sociology and David Easton, The Political System, esp. pp. 47-52; 3-7; 66-78.

the core of the empiricist trust in science is its reputed insistence on the removal of any type of bias in attempting to understand the external world. However, the idealists draw a sharp distinction, which the empiricists do not, between scientific discovery and scientific verification; for them, science differs from other sorts of knowledge, not in how its truths are discovered, but in how they are verified. For the idealist, all attempts at understanding the world reflect one's own personal assumptions about it: the categories under which experience is subsumed and then ordered and integrated; the orientations of one's interests; one's manner in expressing the problems; one's methods of investigation - all these inevitably reflect what one is as a person, his abilities, his aspirations, his social position, his geographical, political and economic location, his educational background. There is an infinite level of detail possible about any event; thus, men must ask questions of the world. But to ask questions is already to betray a certain interest, is already to predetermine the kind of answer that will satisfy as an explanation; moreover, even to cite a particular fact is to imply a theory, for to cite it is to give it prominence for some already existing reason. What one selects as relevant detail reflects a frame of reference that fixes the order and relevance of these details; even what one defines as an 'event' belies a subjective element of perception. To the idealist, the empiricist ideal of the mind as a tabula rasa, a clean slate, an immaculate camera lens, is an unattainable and misleading myth; science, like all attempts to comprehend the world, is a conjecturing, probing, imagining, highly creative and individualistic undertaking: the questions it asks and the procedures it adopts are conditioned by the scientist's education, his social position, his intellectual and emotional interests, and, most importantly, by the scientific

tradition within which he finds himself - in short, the things which help make him what he is both as a man and as a scientist.

But science is not like other attempts at understanding in all respects; what distinguishes science from all other types of knowledge lies not in how the scientist proceeds, the methodology of discovery, but in the ways in which his probings attain the status of truth.¹ For in science, all conjectures must be empirically verifiable; and for any observation to be described as a fact it must have been objectively recorded. Objectivity - a concept appropriate only when discussing the validity of scientific theories - means that any person, regardless of his personal characteristics, given the same set of conditions and the same methods of investigation, would report the same findings. To be accepted as a scientific fact, an event must be publically witnessable, reproducible, and interpersonally transmissible. Furthermore, with respect to the theoretical explanations provided by science, their truth lies not in how they are adduced, but whether they can account for the facts; with respect to science, to account for the facts means that they can predict known, witnessed events and, at the same time, not deductively lead to predictions which contradict known scientific facts nor militate against other useful theories and general empirical rules. In short, scientific theories must 'work' according to objectively determined criteria.

1. There are many statements to this effect in the social science literature. Cf., e.g., Gunnar Myrdal: "This is the logical crux of all science: it assumes in all its endeavours an a priori, but its ambition must constantly be to find an empirical basis for this a priori." Value and Social Theory, p. 235. In fact his famous essay, "The Logical Crux of all Science" is one of the clearest and most succinct statements of this view of science. (Reprinted in Value and Social Theory, pp. 231-6).

For the idealist, all the virtues the empiricists assigned to the 'act of understanding' apply instead to the results of these acts. The 'scientific method' is not a method in the sense of rules of discovery, it is a method in the sense of rules of validation; and, indeed, is better thought of as a description of the theories of science, not the scientific enterprise itself. Thus, a particular theory may originate in a biased, ethically non-neutral (to use my term) environment; it may be idiosyncratic, odd, nationalistic, culturally determined; but it becomes a recognized theory in so far as it accounts for observed phenomena which it accurately predicts.*

As far as the social sciences are concerned, this idealist conception of science quite obviously will emphasize the heuristic value of pure theory. The search for reliable knowledge about empirical social and political phenomena is thought to ultimately require the construction of a system of interrelated propositions which follow upon certain assumptions and rules of procedure, and which both guide practical research as well as provide the organization of the results of such

* Since I am describing this as characteristic of the Weberian tradition, I ought to quote Weber's views on this. In "Critical Studies in the Logic of the Cultural Sciences" he asks the question: "By which logical operations do we acquire the insight and how can be demonstratively establish that such a causal relationship exists between those 'essential' components of the effects and certain components among the infinity of determining factors?" (p. 171 of The Methodology of the Social Sciences by Max Weber, ed. by Edward Shils and H. Finch). His answer, which he explicitly contrasts with that of Mill, is worth quoting in full: "Obviously, not by the simple observation of the course of events in any case, certainly not if one understands by that a 'presuppositionless' mental 'photograph' of all the physical and psychic events occurring in the space-time region - even if such were possible. Rather, does the attribution of effects to causes take place through a process of thought which includes a series of abstractions. The first and decisive one occurs when we conceive of one or a few of the actual causal components as modified in a certain direction and then ask ourselves whether under the conditions which have been thus changed, the same effect...or some other effect 'would be expected.'" (Ibid., p. 171).

research into a coherent account of social change and social order. One result of this urge has been the recent vogue of the so-called 'systems analysis' of social and political structures.¹

But there is another repercussion for the social sciences which is attendant upon this idealist conception of science, and the idealist tradition in general, which is of more direct relevance to this thesis. For this conception of science is often associated with another view, namely, that the human sciences are different from the natural sciences because human behaviour is meaningful and purposeful, not only to the individual actor but to those with whom he comes in contact as well. Because men have goals; because they consciously attempt to select the means most appropriate to the satisfaction of these goals; because they perceive the situation in which they must act; because they have norms and values which govern the selection of goals and the setting of priorities; because of these reasons, the idealists claim that one should not describe men as simply behaving but as acting. This association between idealism in science and the defining of the object of social science as the comprehension of human action is not accidental; for the idea that preconceptions and imaginative categories guide scientific inquiry is prima facie related to the idea that all human behaviour is so guided. Social science thus becomes an attempt to understand human action in so far as it is social, i.e. in so far as the actor takes into account other actors who can influence his action, and in so far as there is some shared set of expectations and, possibly, values, beliefs, and symbols. Social behaviour is characterized by a texture of intelligibility which the sciences of human activity must comprehend in order to

1. For this, cf., David Easton, The Political System, esp. Chs. 4-8.

claim that they have explained this behaviour. Social science is, therefore, a noological science instead of a natural science, in that it attempts to grasp the meaning men attach to their actions, i.e. in that it attempts to understand the rules by which a man behaves from his viewpoint, rather than to simply record as an external observer the physical motions he performs or repeats. The old ideal of the basic identity of the natural and social sciences is quite explicitly denied; human beings are not equivalent to proteins or stars or dogs; their social institutions, pace Turgot, are not like swarms of bees. Their social behaviour must consequently be understood in a different manner.

Hence, a kind of explanation different from the causal and functional variety I have already discussed with respect to the Empiricist tradition is required. For a statistical or a functional relationship, it is claimed by the idealists, does not satisfy our curiosity with regard to human action; we desire to understand the link between motives and action, between end and means intended to achieve this end, which we know to be an important determinant of a man's action; we demand to know how a man's beliefs, perceived role, values and expectations caused his behaviour - in short, to understand we must know the reasons why a man acted as he did. The idealist asserts that we must comprehend the meaning of human phenomena in order to claim that we have explained it, and that, indeed, statistical and functional relationships gain significance only within the framework of this comprehension. All of this means that some kind of interpretive understanding is necessary; this is called verstehen, by which is meant explaining by reference to the reasons why a subject acted as he did.

If verstehen alone were the only method of explanation in the social sciences, then they would hardly deserve the name of science. Fortunately

this is not the case; in the first place, these explanations must be integrated into a rationally consistent system of concepts. More importantly, however, is that these explanations, in order to be accepted as scientific, must be buttressed and validated by causal laws.* By this is meant that the theorist must show how, under the circumstances, one act rather than another was to be expected. To have reasons for acting is always to do so within the framework of a concrete set of social factors which predispose the actor to proceed in one way rather than another. To analyze the influence of these objectively external factors, and to see what the results are when these same factors are present in different situations, is a necessary further step beyond verstehen explanations in order to make them scientific.¹ The upshot of this is, therefore, that not only are the traditional modes of explanation in the social sciences - causal and functional - reinforced and given significance by explanations resulting from verstehen, but the reverse is equally as true: verstehen explanations can be accepted as true only when validated by causal and functional analysis.

It is with this rather abstract background that the ideas peculiar to the Weberian tradition concerning the ethical neutrality of the social sciences and the resultant political role they must play are to be under-

* The action-oriented social scientist would also stress here that causality always means 'objective possibility' in the social sciences, and can never mean the invariant, if-then-always, law sometimes found in the natural sciences. A cause can only be a circumstance which renders a certain event more likely, a circumstance which the actor must grasp and choose to actuate. Cf., e.g., Methodology, p. 80; 180-188.

1. "...if the causal knowledge of the historians consists of the imputation of concrete effects to concrete causes, a valid imputation of any individual effect without the application of 'nomological' knowledge - i.e. knowledge of recurrent causal sequences - would in general be impossible. Whether a single individual component of a relationship is, in a concrete case, to be assigned causal responsibility for an effect, the causal explanation of which is at issue, can in doubtful cases be determined only by estimating the effects which we generally expect from it and from the other components of the same complex which are relevant to the explanation. In other words, the 'adequate' effects of the causal elements involved must be considered in arriving at any such conclusion." Methodology, p. 79; cf., also, ibid., pp. 148, 174-75.

stood. Indeed, the differences with the empiricist tradition on this issue may be traced directly to the philosophical differences on the nature of science in general and the social sciences in particular. It is with this background that I must now turn to Max Weber, the theorist whose ideas dominate this tradition of thought - in fact, they have been scarcely improved upon - and who, unlike the empiricists, dealt with this issue explicitly and at great length.

3.2. Max Weber^{*}

One way to approach Max Weber's methodological writings is as an attempt to delineate the precise relationship between science and politics.

* I intend to discuss Weber only with respect to his methodological writings which are entitled "The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality' in Sociology and Economics;" "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy;" "Critical Studies in the Logic of the Cultural Sciences" (these are collected in the volume, The Methodology of the Social Sciences, trans. by E. Shils and H. Finch, and page numbers refer to this book, hereinafter referred to as Methodology); and the article 'Science as a Vocation' (pp. 129-56 in the collection edited and translated by H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber).

These methodological writings were written with the background of two quite interesting controversies. On the one hand was the debate on the nature of the social sciences, which involved the positivists and Dilthey at polar opposites, and Rickert unsatisfactorily attempting to act as a bridge; Weber saw himself as following Rickert's lead (cf., Methodology, p. 50). On the other hand was the intense debate raging within the Association for Social Policy on the relationship between social science and social policy. In theoretical terms, this was called the Value Dispute, for it involved the question of the role of values in the social sciences. Although there had been much debate on the practical aspects of the question, Weber himself was the first to raise the curtain on its theoretical implications in a debate on municipal trading in Vienna, 1909. As a result, an executive committee was appointed to deal with the question of "The Status of Moral Judgments of Value in Scientific Economics;" and in order to settle the debate, a small book of responses was published in 1913. But the antagonisms continued; the clash culminated in a secret meeting held 5 January, 1914 in Berlin at which Weber stormed out in protest. Ironically, of course, it was Weber's position that was to prove the historical victor. In a longer essay it would interesting to discuss these two controversies at a greater length.

Understood in this way, his discussion of the fact-value question, and his remarks on the logic and methods of the cultural sciences, must be placed within the larger framework of his attempt to discover the parameters of this relationship between thought and action. For this reason, I have decided to reverse the procedure I have employed to this point by commencing my analysis of Weber with his remarks on the implication of social science for political affairs, and only then to introduce the more limited and technical questions specifically related to the nature of the social sciences. By adopting this procedure I also hope that the wider significance of the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences will be correspondingly emphasized.

Broadly stated, Weber sought simultaneously both to separate science and politics and to unite them; it is necessary to understand this paradox in order to apprehend his conception of the relation between an ethically neutral social science on the one hand, and social policy on the other. He sought to divide science from politics in so far as he believed that social science, as indeed any science, was necessarily independent of subjective preferences and was purged of all value judgments; as such, he thought it was logically impossible for a social scientist to prescribe the course of action society ought to pursue. On the other hand, he wished to unite them in so far as he deemed that social science was indispensable for rational political action. I now intend to analyze the terms of this paradox at greater length.

Science provides men with verified information about the world, and a system of explanatory theories by which he attempts to comprehend this information; the scientist makes assertions about what is the case. The politician, on the other hand, leads men, decides what route they ought to follow, exhorts them to communal action, balances the interests

of members against each other and against those of the community as a whole, weighs claims - in short, he defines the goals which society ought to pursue and provides the emotional stimulus to inspire its members to adopt the appropriate course of action. The politician utters pronouncements on what ought to be the case in the world. This fundamental difference between the two enterprises can be expressed in another way, by saying that science deals with facts and results in factual propositions, whereas politics deals with values and results in value judgments. As such, the two are separated by a 'logical gulf.'

The first part of this formulation is that science can be comprised only of factual statements; this theory of Weber's was not, of course, compatible with the notion of a 'policy science' propounded by Saint Simon and Comte, or by any number of contemporary colleagues of Weber's. But he believed that their demand for a policy science rested on a number of errors which originated in particular historical circumstances. Among these were the fact that social science had first arisen in connection with practical considerations; that it was initially coloured by the erroneous view "that immutably invariant natural laws - later, the view that an unambiguous evolutionary principle - governed economic life and that, accordingly, what was normatively right was identical - in the former case with the immutably existent - and in the latter with the inevitably emergent;"¹ and lastly that these two factors merged

to deprive ethical norms of their formal character and through the incorporation of the totality of cultural values into the 'ethical' sphere tried to give a substantive content to ethical norms.²

1. Methodology, pp. 51-2. On pages 22-39 Weber analyzes specific instances of this error by examining the concepts, 'trends,' 'adaptation,' and 'progress,' and relating them to inherent valuational elements lying unnoticed in supposedly scientific pronouncements.

2. Ibid., p. 52. This is a particularly appropriate attack on Durkheim's thought.

Weber thought that all of these positions betrayed a profound confusion between judgments of what is and judgments of what ought to be, all of them implying that the latter could be derived from the former. But Weber differed absolutely with this position; in his opinion,

it can never be the task of an empirical science to provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived.¹

It follows from this that scientists must make clear

exactly at which point the scientific investigator becomes silent and the evaluating and acting person begins to speak. In other words, it should be made explicit just where the arguments are addressed to the analytical understanding and where to the sentiments.²

The other side of the coin represents Weber's conception of politics. At base, the essence of the order of science is the subjection of the mind to facts, demonstrations, proofs, organised procedures, etc.; the essence of the order of politics, on the other hand, is free choice and affirmation. No-one can be forced by means of a demonstration to accept a value he does not himself believe in;³ and no-one, in choosing a value, is simply assenting to a rational demonstration:

To judge the validity of such values is a matter of faith. It may perhaps be a task for the speculative interpretation of life and the universe in quest of their meaning, but it certainly does not fall within the province of empirical science.⁴

1. Ibid., p. 60. At the moment I am merely reporting Weber's conclusion; why and how he thought this to be so will be analyzed later.

2. Ibid., p. 60. He makes the same point more concretely in discussing how values ought to be treated by teachers of social science, cf. ibid., pp. 1-10. In general the rule is: "the investigator and teacher should keep unconditionally separate the establishment of empirical facts (including the 'value-oriented' conduct of the empirical individual whom he is investigating) and his own practical evaluations, i.e. his evaluation of these facts as satisfactory or unsatisfactory (including among these facts evaluations made by the empirical persons who are the objects of investigation). These two things are logically different...." ibid., p. 11.

3. For a concrete example of this, cf., his discussion of whether to be a syndicalist in light of information provided by the social sciences. Ibid., pp. 23-4.

4. Ibid., p. 55. Neither science nor philosophy can eliminate the need for choice in Weber's view; indeed, "there is no (rational or empirical) scientific procedure of any kind whatsoever which can provide us with a decision here." Ibid., p. 19.

The goals of human life and of human societies gain meaning only in terms of human values, and these values themselves are not ultimately arrived at by rational procedure. Men make value judgments, thereby creating values; these values define and shape the goals they seek to accomplish. It is here that the specific role of the political actor is to be found, for it is in politics that certain men choose what goals their society is to pursue. Politics can never be reduced to a science because the two activities are different in kind.

However, in spite of these considerations, Weber also united politics and science. He was able to maintain this apparent contradiction only because the description of politics I have just given is only a partially true account; for politics also comprises that activity by which men attempt to achieve the goals they have set. Thus the politician not only determines the ends of policy, which involves a value-judgment, but also the means by which these ends are to be accomplished. And for Weber a question of means is a technical question to be decided in terms of the criterion of efficiency; as such, it is amenable to scientific demonstration. In terms of the execution of policy goals, science can be synonymous with politics precisely because in this sphere politics is a purely technical operation which can be - indeed, to attain full rationality, must be - decided by scientific argument. In general, "an empirical science cannot tell anyone what he should do - but rather what he can do - and under certain circumstances - what he wishes to do."¹

1. Ibid., p. 55. On pp. 52-54 Weber draws out the implications of this principle: science can determine the 'appropriateness of the means for achieving a given end;' whether an end is 'practically meaningful' (on the basis of existing historical situation); the consequences of adopting a certain means, and thus, "what will the attainment of a desired end 'cost'"; the 'meaning of the ends he desires' in terms of his historical situation; and 'a testing of the ideals according to the postulate of the internal consistency of the desired end.'

Expressed more particularly, the social scientist can provide:

(1) the indispensable means, and (2) the inevitable repercussions, and (3) the thus conditioned competition of numerous possible evaluations in their practical consequences...(this is what) an empirical discipline can demonstrate with the means at its disposal.¹

The fundamental reason why this is the case is that the solution of 'means' questions in politics lies in nothing more than the inversion of the cause and effect statements of science, from which the 'man of action' can derive his prescriptions quite easily.²

In this way, science is one aspect of the process which Weber claimed to be the chief characteristic of modern industrial society, namely, the rationalisation of life.³ This rationalisation, which consists of ordering one's actions according to the most efficient means for the achievement of a clear and specific goal, and organising one's action through planning, enables man to master all events and objects of the world by calculation and designed methods of organisation. This implies that for Weber social science was an historically unique phenomenon whose appearance signalled that, as never in the past, man's social relations could be rationalised, i.e. planned according to scientifically valid knowledge once specific goals had been set. It is the social science administrator who, accepting the goals set by the politicians, proceeds to design the scientifically most efficient means to this end.

This, of course, does not suggest that the social scientist appropriates the entire role of the politician; on the contrary, precisely because his knowledge is scientific it can never eliminate the necessity

1. p. 18, cf., 'Science as a Vocation,' pp. 150-2 in Gerth and Mills, From Max Weber.

2. Cf., p. 45, Methodology

3. Cf., 'Science as a Vocation,' pp. 137-40, From Max Weber.

for choice.

As long as life remains immanent and is interpreted in its own terms, it knows only of an unceasing struggle of these goals with one another. Or, speaking directly, the ultimately possible attitudes towards life are irreconcilable, and hence their struggle can never be brought to a final conclusion. Thus it is necessary to make a final choice¹

This dichotomy between science and choice, and the inability of the one to provide a solution for the other, is at the heart of Max Weber's view of the burden of human existence, that each man had necessarily to choose his own fate.

On the one side, the world is rationalised by science, administration, and the management of economic enterprise; on the other, the struggle between individuals, nations, and world-views forever continues, a struggle in which there can be no ultimate arbiter. For Weber, the fact-value dichotomy is not simply an interesting theoretical distinction; it is absolutely fundamental to his outlook on life. On the 'fact' side, there is the progressive rationalisation to be witnessed in the phenomena of industrialisation, bureaucracy, and technology, and in the possibility of the technical planning of social structure and social action in determining the most efficient means for the execution of specified goals; on the 'value' side, there is the eternal necessity of human choice, commitment, and conscience, determining the values and goals which human beings pursue, and thereby the course of human history, politics, and ethical relations. But not only is this logical distinction between fact and value at the core of his view of the world; it is also the means by which Weber saw social science fulfilling, albeit in more modest fashion, the practical role that earlier theorists had created

1. Ibid., p. 152. Cf., his discussion of science as meaningless in answering Tolstoy's question, what shall we do and how shall we live? Ibid., pp. 140-4.

for it. For, as we shall see in detail momentarily, this distinction ensures the purity of social science and indeed entitles it to be called a science, excluding passion, bias, subjective values and opinions from the results of its research into social behaviour and institutions. As a consequence of this, the results of this research are therefore impersonal and objective; they can be accepted as true by all regardless of personal belief.¹ It is because of its value-neutrality that social science is connected with the other rationalising forces in modern society, providing technical mastery and control over social affairs. Social science can only provide factual information and theories, and as such it cannot inform men as to what course of action they ought ultimately to pursue; nevertheless, because of this feature, it can tell men how best to accomplish what they finally decide they wish to achieve. Social science becomes an instrument by which some of the political problems which divide men, those regarding the proper means to an agreed-upon end, can become amenable to scientific demonstration and therefore rationally soluble.²

Underlying this account of the relationship between social science and political policy lies the requirement that there be a value-free cultural science. The question naturally arises, therefore, how can there be an objective science - one not distorted by the observer's own

1. As Weber proclaimed: "It has been and remains true that a systematically correct scientific proof in the social sciences...must be acknowledged as correct even by a Chinese," (even if this Chinese "lacks a 'sense' for our ethical imperative"). p. 58, Methodology.

2. To demand more than this is to misunderstand the nature of science, and to want, not knowledge, but revelation; not a teacher, but a leader. This unwarranted demand itself is the result of a failure to measure up to a 'workaday existence,' and a 'weakness not to be able to countenance the stern seriousness of our fateful times.' Science as a Vocation, p. 149. Cf., ibid., pp. 143-9.

assumptions and aspirations - of what Weber has already admitted to be the value charged actions, productions and institutions of man? Isn't the conjoining of the two words 'culture' and 'science' a contradiction in terms? The doubt as to whether the cultural sciences can be value-neutral arises with special force because of three characteristics which Weber saw as peculiar to the social sciences because their object of study is human reality, and because their methods of investigation are correspondingly different from those of the natural sciences. These three characteristics are: (a) the cultural sciences necessarily involve verstehen explanations; (b) they are necessarily historical; and (c) they are necessarily value-referential. It is because of these peculiarities in the method of the human sciences that there arises doubt as to whether these sciences can be 'value-free;' I must, therefore, examine these three characteristics before raising the specific question, how did Weber think an ethically neutral social science is possible.

With respect to natural phenomena, man is able to offer explanations only through the intermediary of mathematics, observed constants, and previously established laws; there is no other way in which modern man would have the feeling that he understood natural phenomena except through expressions of factual propositions confirmed through experimentation and verified prediction. But this does not apply to the explanation of human affairs. For one is only satisfied with explanations of these phenomena when he comprehends them, i.e. when the intentions and motives of the actor are understood. This is the case precisely because human behaviour is characterised by an intelligible texture, itself a function of consciousness.

Every science of psychological and social phenomenon is a science of human conduct (which includes all thought and attitudes). These

sciences seek to 'understand' this conduct and by means of this understanding to 'explain' it 'interpretively.'¹

The question naturally arises, whether this 'comprehension' required for an adequate explanation can be achieved in an objective, value-free fashion.

This leads directly into the second special characteristic of the methodology of the social sciences, and one which compounds the difficulties regarding neutrality; namely, that such a science must be historical, i.e. that it studies phenomena which are unique in time.

The social-scientific interest has its point of departure, of course, in the real, i.e. concrete, individually-structured configurations of our cultural life in its universal relationships, which are themselves no less individually-structured.²

The upshot of this is that one cannot explain these particular phenomena simply by establishing general propositions; one must explain why events or institutions adopted the specific form they assumed. This is not to imply that there are no 'general rules governing rational conduct' which the scientist can make explicit and utilize in his explanations; rather,

the point is the use to which these recurrent sequences are put: these laws in themselves aren't enough as they are only hypothetical factors and thus can't explain why historical reality took this specific configuration which we find relevant to us....³

Thus,

where the individuality of a phenomenon is concerned, the question of causality is not a question of laws but of concrete causal relationships: it is not a question of the subsumption of the event under some general rubric as a representative case, but of its imputation as a consequence of some constellation. It is in brief a question of imputation.⁴

1. Methodology, p. 40.

2. Ibid., p. 74.

3. Ibid., p. 78.

4. Ibid., pp. 78-79.

Contrary to the method which characterizes the natural sciences, therefore, knowledge of laws is only a means to facilitate our understanding of a concrete event; to understand how a specific event or institution produced another concrete result in history, the knowledge of laws is only heuristically valuable.¹ The conclusion from this is that the historical dimension of human action reinforces the need for a verstehen explanation, and at the same time removes the one decisive factor which provides the basis for neutrality in the natural sciences, namely, that it results in empirically testable general laws.

But there is yet another reason why the possibility of a neutral science of society might appear as an impossible dream. For although the idealist conception of science, as I have already remarked, insists that all scientific knowledge is partial, precisely because all knowledge is subordinate to the questions which the scientist asks and to the details which he consequently selects, there is another sense in which only the cultural sciences are partial: in the cultural sciences, the field of investigation, the material which he intends to examine, is defined not only with reference to certain theoretical interests of the scientist, nor by the physical presence of concrete objects, but primarily by his own cultural and personal values as well.² In opposition to the

1. "We are concerned here not with 'laws' in the narrower exact natural science sense, but with adequate causal relationships expressed in rules and with the application of the category 'objective possibility.' The establishment of such regularities is not the end but rather the means of knowledge." p. 80, ibid.

2. Cf., e.g., "The significance of a configuration of cultural phenomena and the basis of this significance cannot however be derived and rendered intelligible by a system of analytic laws, however perfect it may be, since the significance of cultural events presupposes a value-orientation toward these events. The concept of culture is a value-concept. Empirical reality becomes 'culture' to us because and insofar as we relate it to value ideas. It includes those segments and only those segments of reality which have become significant to us because of this value-relevance." Ibid., p. 76 (italics in last sentence mine).

idea of a natural science, the social scientists cannot discover

what is meaningful to us by means of a 'presuppositionless' investigation of empirical data. Rather, perception of its meaningfulness to us is the presupposition of its becoming an object of investigation.¹

The reason for this is that culture is precisely that aspect of the totality of human action upon which the social scientist himself confers meaning and significance, and therefore he defines what it is he attempts to understand.² All of this means that the values peculiar to the individual cultural scientist necessarily play a role, indeed a decisive role, in the construction of his scientific theories.

All three of these characteristics peculiar to a science which attempts to explain human social behaviour combine to form the conclusion that "all knowledge of cultural reality...is always knowledge from a particular point of view."³ Specifically, with respect to **its** historical character necessarily utilizing verstehen explanations,

without the investigator's evaluative ideas, there would be no selection of subject matter and no meaningful knowledge of concrete reality...the direction of his personal belief, the refraction of values in the prism of his mind, gives direction to his work.⁴

Moreover, because all human behaviour can be studied only with reference to the scientist's values,

the values to which the scientific genius relates the object of his inquiry may determine, i.e. decide, the 'conception' of a whole epoch, not only concerning what is regarded as 'valuable'

1. Ibid., p. 76.

2. "The transcendental presupposition of every cultural science lies not in our finding a certain culture or any 'culture' in general to be valuable, but rather in the fact that we are cultural beings, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it significance. Whatever this significance may be, it will lead us to judge certain phenomena of human existence in its light and to respond to them as being (positively or negatively) meaningful." Ibid., p. 81.

3. Ibid., p. 81.

4. Ibid., p. 82.

but also concerning what is significant or insignificant, 'important' or 'unimportant' in the phenomena.¹

In summary, therefore:

The choice of the object of investigation and the extent or depth to which this investigation attempts to penetrate into the infinite causal web, are determined by the evaluative ideas which dominate the investigator and his age. In the method of investigation, the 'guiding point of view' is of great importance for the construction of the conceptual scheme which will be used in the investigation.^{2*}

It follows from this that, since each such construction is a function of subjective viewpoint, that there are as many sociological perspectives as there are systems of values governing action; and from this, in turn, it becomes impossible to conceive of a complete social science. All constructs of the social sciences are fundamentally one-sided and tentative, each depending on the subjective interests of the scientist; contrary to the ideal in the natural sciences of integrating all the laws and theories in some kind of progressive synthezisation, in the social sciences these explanations are all attempts awaiting to be overthrown.³

Thus, because the cultural sciences necessarily involve explanation in terms of understanding meaning, as well as codifying observed constants or proposing causal explanations whose value is in making predictions which can be verified as correct or not; because these sciences are historical, and thus cannot explain simply by discovering general laws; and because the field of their inquiry is value-referential, i.e.

1. Ibid., p. 82.

2. Ibid., p. 84. * In a longer essay it would be necessary to show how these characteristics of the logical foundations of social science are also present in the chief methodological tool which rests on these foundations, the ideal type. This Weber does, pp. 85-103.

3. Cf., ibid., p. 105; pp. 159-60.

necessarily defined by the scientist's personal, and historically evolving, values: because of these considerations, the question arises how in the social sciences one can formulate judgments of fact which are ethically neutral, and therefore which enable the social scientist to fulfil his prospective role in modern, rationalised society.

Weber maintains that social science can be ethically neutral, despite these difficulties which are peculiar to it, by drawing an incisive distinction and supporting it with two arguments. The distinction he draws is that between a value-judgment and a value-reference; of the two supportive arguments he adduces, the first concerns the objective procedures of investigation in science, and the second concerns the principles of verification. I intend to complete my analysis of Max Weber with a brief exposition of these three topics.

According to Weber, even though personal and cultural values enter into the selection of the materials of social science, once these materials are accepted it is still possible to arrive at objectively valid conclusions about the causes and consequences of a particular phenomenon, free of implied or explicit value judgments, and therefore binding on anyone who seeks the truth, regardless of his own subjective values. The basis upon which Weber makes this claim is his distinction between value-freedom and value-reference. For while he believes that all the cultural sciences, precisely because they are cultural, are guided in the selection of their material by the interests of the scientist, it does not follow from this that their conclusions are value-laden, their truth or falsity depending in some respects on the values of the individual scientist. The objects of social science may be defined with reference to values, but its conclusions about these objects may still be scientifically free of values.

This distinction is analogous to that between questions and answers. Even if one's interest in a case is inspired by a passionate concern, and even if this concern acts as the primary determinant of what aspects of the case one intends to investigate, one must detach himself from this concern if he is to find an objectively valid answer. In other words, a scientist may be passionately involved and yet look at the evidence objectively and according to the rules of science. To invoke an image: the scientist's values may direct the gaze of his eyes, but they do not determine the nature of the objects that he sees once his eyes are focused.¹

The meaning of this general distinction can be understood more clearly in Weber's discussion of the role of values in the construction of ideal types. Ideal types are mental constructs consisting of certain characteristic features of a group, a belief, an institution, or even a person which are accentuated for analytical purposes; these constructs are absolutely essential as tools in the discussion of human affairs, in making descriptions and constructing hypotheses. Now in light of Weber's views regarding the social scientist's approach to human affairs, it follows naturally that these ideal types are one-sided and tentative: "in the cultural sciences concept construction depends upon the setting of the problem, and the latter varies with the content of culture itself."¹ But from this it does not follow either that these evaluations correspond to those of the investigator,² or that they are implied value judgments.³

1. Ibid., p. 105.

2. "For the purpose of characterising a specific type of attitude, the investigator may construct either an ideal type which is identical with his own personal ethical norms, and in this sense 'objectively' correct, or one which ethically is thoroughly in conflict with his own normative attitudes; and he may then compare the behaviour of the people being investigated with it. Or else he may construct an ideal type attitude of which he has neither positive or negative evaluations." Ibid., p. 43.

3. "For this purpose, interpretation is not at all required to enunciate or to 'suggest' a value-judgment. What it actually 'suggests' in the course of analysis are rather obvious possible relationships of the object to values." (Ibid., p. 143). A value interpretation has "only the formal features that the meaning of interpretation consists in disclosing to us the possible 'evaluative standpoints' and 'evaluative approaches,'" Ibid., p. 144.

To interpret reality through the use of analytically adopted valuations is not, by that act, to prejudice the results of this interpretation by implying value-judgments in them. Thus it is that Weber writes:

The elementary duty of scientific self-control and the only way to avoid serious and foolish blunders requires a sharp, precise distinction between logically comparative analysis of reality by ideal-types in the logical sense and the value-judgment of reality on the basis of ideals. An ideal type in our sense...has no connection with value-judgments, and it has nothing to do with any type of perfection other than a purely logical one.¹

On what grounds does Weber maintain this distinction between value-reference and value-judgment, such that he can assert that social science results in objectively valid factual knowledge? The first reason is that historical and sociological statements concern observable reality, and as such are subject to verification by others through the application of a formal scheme of proof which is independent of any value system. Thus, while it is true that,

in the method of investigation, the guiding 'point of view' is of great importance for the construction of the conceptual scheme which will be used in the investigation. In the mode of their use, however, the investigator is obviously bound by norms of our thought just as much here as elsewhere. For scientific truth is precisely what is valid for all who seek the truth.²

In the selection of problems, in the construction of theories, in the discovery of truths about social arrangements, the scientist's values play a determining role; but in the validation of his theories and the verification of his observations the canons of the scientific method are enforced, and values play no part. This is one reason why Weber can assert that scientific theories have meaning with reference to values but are not dependent on them for the determination of their truth or falsity.

1. Ibid., pp. 98-99; cf., pp. 150-151.

2. Ibid., p. 84.

The second reason for claiming that social science is value-free, although value-referential, is really a subclass of the first; for according to Weber, verstehen explanations, which are an integral part of any social science, and which obviously involve subjective perception and personal interpretation, must be validated by causal explanations before they can be integrated into the explanatory system of the science.

As Weber writes:

Where an analysis remains at the level of such an 'interpretation' of the intrinsic value of the object, the talk of the ascertainment of causes is left undone and the question is not even raised in regard to the object, as to what it 'signifies' causally with respect to other more comprehensive, more contemporaneous cultural objects. At this point, historical research has not yet got under way....¹

But once causal analysis is undertaken to validate the results of verstehen, the ethical neutrality of social science is insured because "causal analysis provides absolutely no value judgment, and a value judgment is absolutely not a causal explanation."² This is how Weber summarises his position in this respect:

(One must make) the logical distinction between the 'primary' historical object, that very valued cultural individual to which attaches the interest in the causal explanation of its coming to be, and the 'secondary' historical facts, the causes to which the 'valued' characteristics of that 'individual' are related in the causal regress. This imputation of causes is made with the goal of being, in principle, 'objectively' valid as empirical truth absolutely in the same sense as any proposition at all of empirical knowledge....It is not the determination of the historical 'causes' for a given 'object' to be explained which is 'subjective' in a certain sense...rather it is the delimitation of the historical 'object,' of the 'individual' itself, for in this the relevant values are decisive and the conception of the values is that which is subject to historical change. It is therefore incorrect in the first place when Edward Meyer asserts (p. 45) that we are 'never' able to attain an 'absolute and unconditionally valid' knowledge of anything historical - this is not correct for 'causes.'³

1. Ibid., p. 161.

2. Ibid., p. 123.

3. Ibid., p. 159.

Thus, the second reason why social science may be described as value free is that, while it necessarily involves verstehen explanations, these explanations must be verified by causal analysis which itself is objectively true irrespective of the personal beliefs or aspirations of the scientist.

The relation of facts and values is far more subtle and complicated in the thought of Weber than that found in the theories of the Empiricist Tradition. Nevertheless, it is still a valid dichotomy, and one that is absolutely essential not only for an understanding of the nature of social science and its relation to policy-making, but also as an essential key to Weber's thinking about man's social problems and the future of his social arrangements. The social scientist, while guided in the problems he selects and the questions he asks by his own personal and cultural values, and while necessarily dealing with values as operative ingredients in human action, still produces factual statements explaining this action and the forms it assumes, statements which are themselves free of any taint of subjective value. Thus, while the social scientist is not engaged in essentially the same enterprise as the natural scientist, as the empiricists claim, neither is he a mere social commentator or political pundit who can provide us, however acutely, only with his own purely interpretive understanding of the human condition, and offer pronouncements which necessarily involve subjective elements of valuation and which can therefore always be attacked as ideological. Social science is situated between these two extremes: although, for my purposes, it is more noteworthy that for Weber social science is indeed a science whose conclusions are ethically neutral. As a result of this, social science supplies the appropriate information for deciding what is the rational course of social action, for deciding which is the most efficient means

to effect a prescribed goal; as such, it is politically useful in the administration of specified policies and the analysis of alternate strategies designed to achieve a specified objective. Social science cannot eliminate all of the subjective, emotional, irrational qualities that characterise political action, but it can remove them from those areas of politics dominated by questions of policy execution and questions of means and methods to fulfil policy goals; the social scientist as social scientist can never be a political leader or saviour, but, by the same token, he can be a social engineer. In this capacity, he unites himself with all those men who participate in the process of rationalising the world, by bringing to social affairs the same attitudes of order and control, the same bureaucratic organization, and the same impersonal, objective criteria of decision-making that characterize modern man's relationship to nature. For Weber, the doctrine of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences is the key which will complete the rationalization of the Modern Age, and which will effect the final realization of the Technological Revolution which has already so transformed man's world.

3.3. A Note on the Modern Weberians

Since World War II, especially with the internationalization of social science and the subsequent spread of the thought of Max Weber,¹ and especially because of the new importance being assigned to the role of theory in science in general² and social science in particular,³ the

1. The articles in the Methodology of the Social Sciences were only translated in 1949.

2. Primarily because of the work of Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery (Vienna, 1935).

3. Cf., Edward Shils, The Present State of American Sociology (Glencoe, 1948); David Easton, The Political System (New York, 1953), especially pp. 47-64. This was also the constant call of Talcott Parsons and all those advocating a form of 'Systems Analysis.'

views of Weber on the question of the ethical neutrality of the social sciences have gained a great deal of prominence in the literature, and indeed have come to represent at least as important a tradition as that of the empiricists. However, not only because a full analysis of these developments is impossible in a thesis of this length, but also because the literature is particularly repetitive, regurgitating almost verbatim the ideas of Weber himself, I do not intend to examine them; instead, I will simply list a few of them.¹ There are, however, two authors who are well worth consulting because they express the Weberian viewpoint so clearly and forcefully, and because they have been extremely influential on contemporary thought regarding these matters. I am referring to Gunnar Myrdal² and Karl Mannheim.³

1. Cf., for example, the following: Ralf Dahrendorf, Essays in the Theory of Society (Routledge, Kegan Paul; London 1968) Chapter 1, "Values and Social Science: the Value Dispute in Perspective," pp.1-18; Howard Becker, Through Values to Social Interpretation (1950-, Chap. VI, "Supreme Values and the Sociologist, or Our Roles and their Loyalties" pp. 281-305; Edward Shils, "Social Science and Social Policy," Philosophy of Science, vol.16, No.3 July 1949, pp.219-242; Edward Shils The Present State of American Sociology (1948); Philip Hauswer, "Social Science and Social Engineering," Philosophy of Science, vol.16, No.3, July 1949, pp.209-218; Emile Benoit-Smullyan, "Value Judgments and the Social Sciences," The Journal of Philosophy, XLII, No.8, April 13, 1945; pp.197-210; Harry Eckstein, "Political Science and Public Policy" in Ithiel de la Sola Pool, ed. Contemporary Political Science: toward empirical theory (1967) pp. 121-165; Joseph Schumpeter, "Science and Ideology," The American Economic Review, March 1949 esp. pp. 346-59; Gabriel Almond, "Politics, Science, and Ethics" pp.283-294, and Lewis A. Dexter "Political Processes and Judgments of Value" pp.294-305, both in the American Political Science Review, vol.40, April 1946; Robert Bierstadt, "A Critique of Empiricism in Sociology," American Sociological Review, XIV, Oct. 1949, pp.584-592.

2. Cf., Gunnar Myrdal, Value in Social Theory, ed. by Paul Streeton, (London, 1958), which is a collection taken from writings which date back to 1933; and Objectivity in Social Research (London, 1970) for his most recent thoughts on the subject. I should warn that Myrdal does not share Weber's belief that science can determine the best means to a given end, and thus that the political aspect of the Weberian Tradition is denied.

3. Cf., Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, (London, 1936), first published in Germany in 1929. This, his most important theoretical work, has a section devoted specifically to just the themes I have been discussing, namely, part III, 'The Prospects of Scientific Politics: the relationship between Social Theory and political practice,' pp.97-173. In the same work he has an attack on the positivist conception of science, pp. 146-153. It must be admitted here that Mannheim does not simply

There is one side development to which I wish to call attention. This is pragmatism in American social science; this doctrine and viewpoint might best be called an ally of the Weberian Tradition. Pragmatism is an important mode of thought which developed in the social sciences as a counter-weight to the almost naive empiricism which dominated the discipline in the first decades of this century in the United States, and as such it is worth examining for itself. Moreover, it prepared the ground in America, so that when Weber's methodological works became generally known in English, the community of social scientists, especially those interested in the construction of social theory, were more open to his message. That pragmatism should result in a view of the relation between facts and values, and between social science and social policy, analogous to that of Weber should not be particularly surprising. In the first place, both have their roots in the philosophy of Kant.¹ Moreover, both emphasize, among other things, that the mind,

(Contd.) repeat the thought of Weber; for he is proposing a doctrine learned from Marx (the social determination of knowledge) in Weberian terms, thereby hoping to establish a new sociology, the Sociology of Knowledge. (For his debt to both Marx and Weber, cf., ibid., pp. 62-74, 165-171). But with respect to his philosophy of science, his methodological observations on the social sciences, his understanding of the role values play in scientific and political life, and his notion of the role of the social scientist in political affairs, he qualifies as a modern Weberian. Mannheim's other significant work, Man and Society, (London, 1935) is an application of the techniques of Ideology and Utopia to the problems of the disintegration of a capitalist society. It is interesting because it locates Mannheim within the tradition of thought initiated by Saint Simon, the Organizational School of Industrial Society.

1. Pierce explicitly acknowledged that he was led to the method of Pragmatism by reflecting on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and on the Kantian use of pragmatisch for empirical, experimentally conditioned laws based on, and applying to, experience. Dewey, in his article "The Development of American Pragmatism" described Pierce's view as stemming from an 'experimental, not a priori, explanation of Kant.'

and specifically human interests, directs inquiry, and that, as such, all inquiry is value-relevant; but both equally emphasize that the results of scientific inquiry are indeed objective and impersonal, i.e., value-free.

The pragmatic viewpoint which was to influence certain social scientists stresses that the conduct of an investigation is always inspired by an initial state of real doubt and felt uncertainty; indeed it defines the purpose of any inquiry to produce satisfying solutions and to make sense out of what was initially a discordant, unsatisfactory, problematic situation. Furthermore, it views ordered inquiry as commencing only when the investigator structures his situation, itself defined by his doubts, into the form of a problem. And lastly, it consequently conceives of the ideas an investigator uses in attempting to solve his problems as plans of action or proposals formed as possible solutions; as such, ideas are not, as the empiricists claimed, mere copies of external reality, but are leading principles which transform an indefinite situation into a comprehensible, workable one. Ideas are not merely representational; they are by nature prospective as well. An inquirer studies his situation in light of either its shortcomings or its potentialities, but always with an eye toward fulfillment; these concerns provide the framework within which facts are examined, selected, cited, etc. All reality functions as a sign, as a piece of evidence, as an argument, as an answer, not in and of itself, but only in the context of a subject putting exact questions, seeking solutions, struggling to find his way.

As a result of this, the pragmatist does not formulate the theories of science as simply descriptively true statements of reality serving as premises from which a conclusion about the world may be deduced - a view

held by those I discussed in the 'Empiricist Tradition;' rather, he maintains that scientific theories are instrumental procedures guiding experimental inquiry, and that they are explanatory hypotheses which indicate how certain formulations are to be derived from, and understood in terms of, other formulations of events - a view not unlike that held by Weber.

The pragmatist does not conclude from this, however, that all knowledge is necessarily subjective and personal; on the contrary, he explicitly separates the process of inquiry from the results of this inquiry. In some of its expressions, though not all, the pragmatic tradition defines a statement as true if it is warranted, i.e. if it has been verified through repeated experimental practice. Truth is public in character, and impersonal; as Charles Pierce wrote: "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by truth...."¹

It is in terms of these ideas about the nature of science and its inherently practical nature that pragmatism made itself felt in the social sciences. As far as the themes of this thesis are concerned, it was responsible for at least one classic statement, Robert S. Lynd's extremely influential Knowledge For What: The Place of Social Science in American Culture.² It is striking how closely Lynd's fundamental ideas parallel those of Weber, and it is for this reason that I would classify him, and others in this tradition,³ as 'Modern Weberians.'

1. From "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," Popular Science Monthly, 1878.

2. (Princeton, 1939). This book is constantly cited in the literature, and has recently been republished (1969).

3. Another example of the pragmatic viewpoint is the work of Harold Lasswell, dean of American political scientists. For his methodological writings, cf., The Analysis of Political Behaviour (London, 1948), as well as the essay, "The Policy Orientation" in Lasswell and Lerner (ed.), The Policy Sciences (Stanford, 1951); for the political implications of his work in social science, cf., especially Psychopathology and Politics (Chicago, 1930), pp. 194-203 primarily.

4. The Doctrine of Ethical Neutrality and Technological Society: the Ideology of Social Science

"The contemporary social order must collapse if rational social control and the individual's mastery over his own impulses do not keep step with technological development."

Karl Mannheim, Man and Society,
p. 42.

Although I have divided social science into two traditions of thought, and although it is quite true that there is still a great deal of controversy between them, from a broader perspective it should now be obvious that behind these real but more surface differences lie fundamental similarities. The core which unites all of these similarities is the belief that social science is indeed a science, conceived, in one way or another, as analogous to the natural sciences. And even though there are profound disagreements as to how each conceives the nature of the scientific enterprise, both traditions agree that its results must rest on the empirical verification of its observations and its theories, and that its results are impersonal and objective, true and dependable irrespective of the personality of the scientist in question. From this viewpoint, the essence of science is deemed by both traditions to be that its results are abstracted from concrete situations and its explanations are objectified, free from the taint of personality.

In my Historical Review, I have attempted to demonstrate that a particular theorist's views with regard to the question of ethical neutrality are linked to his conception of the nature of science. For each theorist's conception of the nature of science influences his judgment as to the methodology appropriate to the social sciences; this judgment, in turn, determines his assessment of the kind(s) of explanation relevant to a study of man and man's social affairs; and this assessment, in turn,

conditions his views on the question of ethical neutrality. However, from another vantage point, it is also pertinent to stress that the direction of influence proceeds in the other direction as well. This is to say, in other words, that it is the doctrine of ethical neutrality which conditions a theorist's observations concerning the kinds of relevant explanation, methodology, and nature of science, as well as the other way round. It is for this reason that one can claim that it is not only their belief in the possibility of a social science, but also their assertion of the ethical neutrality of this science, that is the factor which unites the two traditions I have mentioned.

To comprehend how it is that the doctrine of ethical neutrality can play such a pivotal and somewhat paradoxical role in social science, it is necessary to understand that these two traditions are united by more than an underlying, unifying view of the nature of social science. Even more significant is the association of this view with the larger issues of the nature of modern society, and how this philosophical context defines the aspirations that theorists possess for social science. For, as I have tried to demonstrate, the doctrine of ethical neutrality can be appreciated only within the context of a certain style of thinking about so-called technological society.

The purpose and principle of organization of a technological society is the translation of the rules and dictates of science into economic and social practice, thereby rationalizing the environment in which man lives. This society is grounded on the conviction that it is the mastery of chance and the overcoming of unpredictable events that is the chief means of improving the race; for it is this mastery and power that enables man to control and manipulate the forces external to him, thereby leading to the satisfaction of his desires and needs, and eliminating the fear and

dependence which mark his primitive existence. In the technological society, steps are undertaken to order and regulate every aspect of life so that men may enjoy their terrestrial existence through the efficient fulfillment of their mutual wants, and the elimination of social disharmony. In this way, man, to the fullest extent possible, escapes the hardships and blind pain of nature.

In the Division of Labour in Society Durkheim says that man can escape nature not merely by controlling it, but also by creating another world where he himself is at home and secure; this world is society. Indeed, all of the theorists I have discussed assert that this is not only a desirable ideal, but a vitally necessary and urgent task. All perceive that modern industrial life, itself engendered by the revolution in thinking and technique caused by the science of nature, is a society so divisive, competitive, egotistical, and dynamic that it demands some form of regulation and control. Even though all of them applaud its goals and welcome the manipulative power it values, they all write of the new science with the horrors of this industrial society in front of them. Most, though not all, of these theorists believe that the early individualistic, capitalist forms of industrial society, while necessary as a phase to overthrow the old feudalism, were not satisfactory as a permanent condition. Thus, it is closer to the truth to say that they do not wish to destroy capitalism as much as to build on its foundation, preserving and fulfilling the possibilities inherent in the attitudes which gave rise to it in the first place. For them, this social system, left unregulated, only leads to anomie and alienation; and therefore, they conclude, that it itself must be controlled by man, just as its structure made it possible for men to control and dominate the material world. The recurring theme that runs throughout this tradition of dis-

course is the necessity for the discovery and implementation of a social structure which can maintain itself, while at the same time adapting its form to the ceaseless advance of economic production.

This search for a modern social structure that is commensurate with the needs of the industrial system is itself based on the deeper assumption (one the natural scientist shares as well) that it is the external environment, rather than internal values or personal character, which is the source of man's social and human problems: the social scientist is concerned with society, its structure and its institutions. In general, these theorists believe that man's problems can best be solved through sociological, as opposed to psychological or theological, methods. It is by the rearrangement of the inadequate, outmoded, or inefficient institutions of industrial society that its worst, most repressive aspects will be eliminated. The line should not be drawn too firmly; nevertheless, these social scientists are united in their firm faith that the salvation of man is a political rather than a moral problem.¹ Moreover, it is further presumed that much - though, it is true, not all - of the required transformation in man's political, social and economic affairs can only be accomplished in light of the laws of social science. An

1. Even those theorists who claim that the lack of moral consensus in industrial society is its most pressing problem, and therefore who concentrate their attentions on ostensibly moral, intellectual and psychological solutions, often turn to changes in the social structure and reforms of specific institutions by some authority as the means by which this problem can be solved. Hence, Comte's proposals regarding government and industrial management; and hence Durkheim's remedy for the moral anarchy in industrial society being the establishment of a new mode of social interaction, the occupational corporation. Durkheim makes this point very clear in his book Suicide: ways of thinking and acting cannot be changed without "changing the collective existence itself and this cannot be done without modifying its anatomical constitution. By calling the evil of which the abnormal increase in suicide is symptomatic a moral evil, we are far from thinking to reduce it to some superficial ill which may be conjured away by soft words. On the contrary, the change in moral temperament thus betrayed bears witness to a profound change in our social structure. To cure one, therefore, the other must be reformed." Suicide, tr: J.A.Spaulding and George Simpson (Free Press, 1951), p. 387 (italics mine).

organized structure made 'rational' by science, a pattern which harmonizes and mutually satisfies the individual interests of its members, is the goal of the social scientist; this is both the ideal solution, and the unstated assumption, of the technological view of man's social problems.

But the mastery of nature and society requires the elimination of personal bias: this is the legacy of that prophet of the new order, Francis Bacon. All of these theorists proclaim that the eradication of bias is a necessary first step to increased knowledge of a true kind, and thus to power. Only objective, impersonal facts can inform man about the world in which he is destined to struggle, can reveal its nature, its mechanisms, its modes of adaptation, the interrelationships of its events. The ways of the world are, on the primary level, independent of the will of man, imperturbable and autonomous; it is thus that he must resign himself to them. This he can achieve only by opening himself to their laws and procedures, and by removing his own impractical, ungrounded, idealistic aspirations and wishes. Man must throw off the juvenile habit of interpreting the world solely in terms of his own subjective needs and whims, and adopt the mature attitude of accepting that there are others besides oneself with a life of their own. He must become objective; this is what Reason dictates.

In their overwhelming desire to be objective, these social scientists have adopted the method of natural science as the paradigm that one must follow. In this manner, following the successful precedent of the natural sciences, social scientists have initiated their inquiries by presuming that only certain methods of investigation, however modified, provide objective knowledge. By this process, the belief in Reason gradually has become transformed - as Comte predicted, in what was surely a self-fulfilling prophecy - into a belief in science. This inversion

of the original relationship between Reason and science, the impetus for the social scientific undertaking in the first instance, has lead to the a priori assumption, nay, conviction, that it is only a science analogous to natural science that can help man in his social plight. Only science is empirically testable, quantifiable, and factual, and therefore - a short step in a positivistic age - rational. In this situation, to claim that any interpretation of man's social affairs is in principle no different from an interpretation of his artistic or literary products, and is no more scientific, is greeted as tantamount to condemning man to eternal damnation, and abrogating the responsibility all social scientists feel as guardians of sociological truth.

To mention the responsibility felt by the social scientist is to penetrate to the core of the relationship existing between technological society, social science, and politics. For, on the one hand, social science is thought to be one aspect of the foundation of technological society, and is therefore associated with the deepest convictions concerning of what the salvation of man will consist, convictions which grew out of what is loosely called the Enlightenment. Moreover, in search of this goal, social science is prompted by a profound desire to overcome the limitations and uncertainties of politics, and to accomplish this by adopting an engineering role similar to that found in the applied physical sciences. The social scientist wishes to eliminate the notion that agreement in politics should be reached by negotiation, compromise, balance of interests, power brokerage; he wants to banish forever the subversive idea that in politics, even when dealing with the execution of policy, there is no single answer which is simply 'correct,' and the retrogressive claim that political argument, even argument about so-called means to ends, can be settled only in terms of the value-ascribing dis-

course of political action and political philosophy. But for the social science advisor to fulfill his role, it is necessary for him to interpret his study as ethically neutral: here we touch one of the chief sources for the claim of a value-free sociology. It is the role that social science is meant to play in technological society that leads to the claim of ethical neutrality, as much as the opposite.

These theorists believe that the issues of politics can be settled only if its protagonists would adopt the scientific method. True, in the 20th century, chiefly due to the logical distinction drawn between factual propositions and value judgments, the role of the scientific politician has been somewhat deflated; but this deflating is not as great as one might hastily infer. Many scientists and theorists argue that the ends of politics are more or less universally accepted, and more or less determined by the nature of industrial society anyway; that it is the Means to these Ends which are the prime source of argument and disruption in technological society; and, lastly, that the area amenable to scientific judgment is increasing as technical intelligence and apparatus becomes more sophisticated, and is applied to areas previously reserved for intuitive judgments based on 'experience.' Consequently, the social scientist is still to function as a pivotal figure in the new politics of the future.

One implication of this view of the relation between social science and social policy is a growing responsibility accorded to an elite of social engineers, planners, managers, experts all, who alone, it is claimed, are capable of ascertaining the correct answers to social problems, and of properly implementing them. It is not purely fortuitous that all of these thinkers belong to the 'Organizational School' of Industrial Society which places ultimate hope on a planned social order.

Social science grows out of a tradition which self-consciously stresses hierarchy, differentiation, cohesion, stability, solidarity, order, and which assigns to the manipulative powers inherent in objective knowledge the means for human salvation. Sometimes unwittingly, but never accidentally, these social theorists have subscribed to an-elitist political theory, with all the consequent structural formations associated with such a theory.

In the technological society, science signifies not only the source of power and wealth, but also, through the science of society, a method of social control, imparting order, regularity, and a dependable pattern to society. Indeed, one reason for social science at all is the firm conviction that science, and science alone, can solve the problems it has created as a by-product of its effort to subdue and direct the threatening forces of nature, that science alone can create, amidst this world of material plenty, a harmonious and protective social life as well. The root assumption of the technological viewpoint is that, left to itself, science can provide a solution to its own problems; thus, to the problems of technology, the answer is more technology, in this case social technology in the form of a 'policy science.' The doctrine of a policy science is the single most important factor in this prescription, and can only be understood when perceived as embedded in this context.

Bertrand Russell remarked somewhere that the deepest convictions of philosophers are seldom contained in their formal arguments, and that their comprehensive viewpoints and fundamental beliefs lie unexamined and unnoticed as the roots which support their ingenious and complicated doctrines. This remark bears a twofold relevance to what I have been discussing. On the one hand, it is the assumptions and convictions I have been analyzing which give meaning, direction, and significance to

the entire enterprise of social science, and especially to the specific doctrine by which it is to achieve its goals, the doctrine of a policy science. Furthermore, these assumptions also provide the background for the specific notions which comprise the doctrine of a policy science: that the social sciences are ethically neutral, and that certain sorts of political problem can be solved by the application of scientific technique.

Moreover, Russell's remark is equally relevant to my thesis; for the object of this thesis is not only to attack the conception of a policy science as misconceived in principle, to slay the false and dangerous conception, of the possibility of a social engineer deciding in a nonpartisan manner the best means for the accomplishment of a given, politically decided end. I also wish (and here is my personal interest in the case) to provide by this attack a weapon against the entire technological tradition, its view of man, its view of his social problems and the political ramifications which issue from these views.

This doctrine must be situated in a context in order to understand the source of its power. Similarly, this thesis must be located in a tradition of discourse in order to understand the reason for undertaking it. It is only within the broader framework provided by political philosophy that its significance for the general affairs of men may be ascertained and appreciated.

II. ANALYTIC CRITIQUE

"It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just as far as the nature of the subject admits."

Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics,
1094b

"The familiar contrast of 'normative or evaluative' as opposed to the factual is in need, like so many dichotomies, of elimination."

John Austin, How To Do Things With Words, p. 148.

I intend to accomplish my task of showing the impossibility of a policy science which can impartially determine the best means to a given end by demonstrating that it rests on a series of logical mistakes. These logical errors fall into two broad classes: those regarding the social sciences, and those regarding the nature of politics and political decisions. More particularly, Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to establishing that both the Descriptions (5.) and the Explanations (6.) of social action and social institutions to be found in the social sciences cannot be value-free, and that they therefore cannot serve as the basis of a policy science. Chapter 7 is based on the assumption that what was argued in Chapters 5 and 6 is incorrect, and that in fact a value-neutral social science is possible; its purpose is to show the incoherence of the claim that through such a science a policy science will evolve which will provide objectively established means for the achievement of some political goal, and it does so by arguing that it is impossible to decide on morally neutral grounds which means to adopt to accomplish a goal, and also that, even if it were possible to do this, to adopt the scientifically best means is itself not a morally neutral step. Chapter 8 is intended to elucidate how the whole idea of replacing some or all of politics by a science betrays a fundamental misconception of the nature of politics and the role it plays in social life; it concludes with an analysis of the dangers for both the theory and practice of contemporary politics which the notion of a policy science contains. In proceeding along these lines of development, I hope that various elements re-inforce one another. And, of course, because I am exposing the logical errors in this doctrine, I hope I will have been successful in demonstrating that such a notion is incoherent, in theory unthinkable.

5. Description and Social Action

"So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and false?' -- It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in the form of life. If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgements."

L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, I, 241-242.

The question which this chapter analyzes is whether the descriptions of social behaviour found in the social sciences can be value free. The thesis which it attempts to establish is that, in so far as social science utilizes either action or group concepts, it thereby employs a data language comprised not of objective terms but of appraisal concepts, and that therefore these sciences, in so far as they adopt this kind of language,* are fundamentally value laden. By value laden I mean two things: first,

* I want to be quite clear at the very outset as to exactly how far my argument extends. In order to do this, it is necessary to raise several extremely difficult questions in this footnote. In the text of this chapter I assume that descriptions in the social sciences do, as a matter of fact, make use of both action and group concepts (indeed, these concepts are presently to be found in the overwhelming majority of the descriptions in such sciences.). But this means that my arguments are valuable only contingently, i.e. only as long as these sciences continue to use these concepts. However, I would also like to claim that in theory descriptions in the social sciences cannot be neutral because they must utilize these concepts. This raises the question whether it is conceivable that action and group concepts could be eliminated in the descriptions of social behaviour. This question is related to several points raised in the chapter, and I therefore wish to address myself to it. The argument proceeds through three main stages, and only at the end will the rather complicated answer to this question become clear.

The first stage concerns the question whether the social sciences, as social sciences, could be content with descriptions which are composed of terms equivalent to those of the natural sciences, i.e. terms naming physical events, or whether such notions as purpose, significance, rule, membership, intention, etc. are indispensable for such a science. To this fairly limited question my reply is that, precisely because social behaviour is, by definition, meaningful behaviour, it consequently must be described in terms quite different from those of the natural sciences. For example, to describe a witnessed event as a dance, which is to see it as a social event, is not equivalent to describing this event in terms of the quantity of its steps and movements or the speed of its repeated

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that these concepts are subjective because they contain elements of personal opinion, and that therefore their use is not indifferent as between all theorists and all viewpoints; and second, that such concepts imply a value stance toward the persons and events which the

(Contd.) gestures. A dance is a social concept, in which the repetitive movements in response to the music are seen as part of a ritual which pre-determines their order, the ritual possessing this power because of the expectations which the participants share with one another, and which they recognize as reason enough to move in the prescribed manner. The elapsed time between specific shuffles, no matter how carefully recorded, does not add up to a dance, and in so far as it is this social aspect of the event in which the scientist is interested, this social concept must be employed. Similarly, the observer views, not a piece of wood being pushed around, but a chess piece, and the questions we want to ask about it are not those one would ask if it were simply a piece of wood. Thus, we want to inquire, not what observable regularity is there in its movements, not by what physical means is it moved, but why is that move being made, what strategy does it fit into, what intended effect will it have on the opponent's moves? We ask these questions precisely because we see the bit of wood as a piece in a game, and we realize that we cannot understand what it is apart from the social concept of game, i.e. apart from such concepts as rules, strategy, winning, expectations, etc. Without such concepts as rules, norms, and intentions the notions of dance and chess piece are unintelligible, and without notions such as these (notions such as voting, marriage, signalling, commanding, robbing, attempting) the social sciences could no longer be concerned with what is peculiarly social behaviour. Without action and group concepts embodying notions like rule, intention, and purpose, the social sciences would no longer be social sciences.

But there is a possible retort to this view which introduces the second stage of the argument. This is the position that the social sciences can retain the use of action and group concepts, and the distinctions they allow us to draw, but at the same time 'purify' them by 'operationally redefining' them in terms of publically measurable physical events. Specifically, action and group concepts are translated into physiological movements. Unfortunately, this does not solve the problem: for if to identify social acts one must employ criteria involving concepts of meaning (rules, norms, intention, etc.), then these physical descriptions necessarily presuppose for their validity a prior 'social identification' in terms of the very action and group concepts they are intended to replace. For example, it may be that one wishes to 'operationally define' aggressive behaviour as 'behaviour which produces injury to or flight by the child to whom it is directed' in order to make an 'objective description of (a) behaviour pattern used by homo sapiens' (cf. W.C. McGrew, Proc. 2nd Int'l Congr. Primatology, 1968, vol. 1, pp. 149-159, Karger, Basel/New York, 1969); but aggression is a social, not a physical, concept, and while it may be interesting to learn about such physical interaction, this can only inform us about aggressive behaviour if we have already decided that each time such physical interactions occur we will label them acts of aggression. But this is a

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theorist is describing. In other words, I am claiming that the nomenclature of a social science using such terms cannot be said to be value neutral, and this because the objects which it studies and attempts to explain cannot be identified and described apart from our moral attitudes

(Contd.) completely arbitrary decision; for physical movements are neither necessary conditions for there to be an aggressive act (one can be violently aggressive with words), nor can they provide sufficient conditions (one may be playacting). The decision about what act is and what act is not an aggressive act can only be made by taking into account social concepts, for aggression involves questions of offence, beginning a quarrel, attack, and these, in turn, involve notions of appropriate social behaviour, rules of play, gamesmanship, honour, status, manners, etc., etc. To equate aggression with certain physical movements is to logically impoverish it, since the term is thereby stripped of its logical connection with other social and moral concepts such as 'right', 'provoke', 'enemy' and 'offence'. I do not mean to imply by this, nor does it follow from what I have said, that such studies of physical interactions, their frequency, their concrete forms, how they vary under altered conditions, are useless or inappropriate to the study of human behaviour. It only means that what I am calling social categories utilizing action and group concepts are necessary in the identification of a specific social action, that this is logically prior to such studies, and that no account in social science can be given entirely in terms of concepts operationally defined as physiological movements. The predicates used to describe social actions are not definable by any set of purely observation predicates.

The conclusion to be drawn from both the steps in the argument so far may be expressed as follows: the attempt to remove those concepts peculiar to the social sciences, i.e. action and group concepts, or the attempt to operationally redefine all of them as physiological movements, thereby radically altering their ordinary meaning, is a self-defeating manoeuvre because it eliminates that subject matter which it is the social sciences' function to explain. A mechanical description of the actions of men simply does not provide the kind of description of behaviour for which the social scientist is looking. This is not to deny that mechanical accounts are possible, or even useful; rather, it is to assert that in the world of men interacting with one another as social, economic, political, and moral beings, the 'world' studied by the social scientist, action and group concepts are necessary because they help us to recognize features of our experience which are the raison d'etre of the social sciences. We cannot know that any act is aggressive simply by knowing how a person's arms are moved, and if all we had were physiological descriptions of how bodies moved, we could not recognize certain acts as being ones of giving, or others as chess playing, dancing, speaking a language, or strutting. Improving methods of observing and measuring muscular movements neither fundamentally contributes to, nor detracts from, the observations we make about human beings conceived as social actors performing social roles; they belong to quite different ways of looking at his conduct. Both attempts ultimately seek to shift the object of inquiry away from 'social facts' towards 'physiological facts',

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towards them. In so far as I am successful, the belief that the distinction between description and evaluation is identical to the distinction between fact and value - a belief central to the tradition I surveyed in Part I - is proved to have been mistaken. As an alternative view,

(Contd.) and both therefore result in the elimination of the very subject matter which the social sciences are attempting to investigate in the first place. For this reason it appears as if action and group concepts are logically necessary for a social science.

But this leads into the third and last step of the argument. For the question arises quite naturally from what I have been arguing, isn't it possible for human behaviour, including social behaviour, to be described and explained in ways which do not employ these social terms? Ultimately, it may be asserted, the use of action and group concepts, and the distinctions they imply and rest upon, may be completely eliminated from the vocabulary we employ to describe human behaviour, and the nomenclature used in the science of man will then be completely neutral. Perhaps in time human action will be described in terms of antecedent-consequent, of quantifiable stimulus and quantifiable response, utilizing the language of cybernetics and information theory, and perhaps finally the vocabulary of neurophysiological programming and the notation of electrical circuitry. In other words, our conception of man may radically alter in the future, and we may come to view him, without logical contradiction, as a complicated machine. The valid point in this objection is to remind one that the use of action and group concepts - those concepts, and the distinctions they embody, at present thought indispensable to an understanding of man - ultimately rests on a certain view of his nature, a view which is itself changeable and contingent. All distinctions rest on criteria which are embedded in the conceptual schemes of the day, and action and group concepts are no exception; they too are rooted in certain presuppositions about man and his social relations. This contingent and alterable aspect of such apparently necessary and unavoidable notions as rule, intention, and purpose, i.e. all those ideas which go to make up the concept of a person, is hidden because such notions are implicit in the practical affairs of everyday life, and are expressed in our customs, laws, and language; life, and therefore thought, seems inconceivable without them. But the important point is that these notions are facts of life, not logical necessities, and their supposed irreplacability is the result of custom, not of deductive argument. By dramatically and fundamentally altering man's most primitive notions of himself, so that he no longer sees himself as a purposeful, willful, free, responsible and peculiarly social creature, it is logically conceivable that action and group concepts will be deemed inappropriate to a science of man, romantic hangovers from a bygone era.

If such a revolution in thought were to occur, social science would change out of all recognition from what it has been, is now, and will continue to be in the foreseeable future. Indeed, the idea of a social science would no longer bear any resemblance to that which I am discussing in this thesis, nor to that I described in Part I. It is for this reason that this alternative, though it is logically possible and can only be decided on empirical grounds, is not relevant to my concerns,

(Contd.)

I propose that many of the terms scientists use to characterize social processes depend for their acceptance on whether we adopt the same attitudes towards those whom we are observing as he does. Descriptions of social action include a great many of what I shall call moral notions; in so far as these notions provide the subject matter of the social sciences, such sciences cannot be called value free, because they thus operate within a world delimited by concepts of evaluation. To invoke an analogy: it would be better to imagine the descriptions of the social scientist as having more affinity with the sentences passed by a judge after he has weighed evidence, than as similar to the reports of a chemist on his observations of the interactions of the elements.

The argument of this chapter falls into three main parts: the first part (5.1.) concerns action concepts, and attempts to demonstrate that such concepts are value laden; the second (5.2.) deals with group concepts, and attempts to make a similar case regarding them; the third part (5.3.) proceeds to make some general remarks on descriptions in

(Contd.) except in so far as it places in sharp relief the assumptions of the 'Tradition' (if such a pervasive view can be called a tradition) which I share with the social scientists whom I am arguing against. Ultimately, there is no a priori reason why the social sciences cannot be transformed into a physical science which can predict all relevant bodily movements; but it is also worthwhile at this point to take cognizance of the truism that in such a case the social sciences would indeed no longer be social sciences in any way resembling the way we at present understand that term.

We may conclude from all of this that action and group concepts are indeed logically necessary for a social science understood as we now understand that science, but that there is no logical reason (although there are overwhelming practical, legal, moral, and theoretical reasons) why the idea of a social science cannot change, so that such concepts would no longer be required. As such, however, it would be outside the bounds of this thesis. It should also be stressed at this point that none of the arguments in this footnote affects what I claim regarding action and group concepts per se, and that such claims remain relevant for as long as social scientists do, as a matter of fact, use such concepts.

the social sciences, that they are composed of terms of a different logical framework from that of the 'purely observational' sciences, i.e. that they are constructed on the basis, not of scientific terms, but of moral notions.

5.1 Action Concepts

An action is any piece of behaviour whose complete description requires implicit mention, in addition to manifest physical movements, either of such things as the subject's intentions, motives or plans, or such things as moral, legal or social standards or rules. An action is something done, some plan executed, some transgression committed, some policy enacted, some ritual performed, some game played, etc., by an agent. By action concepts I mean, therefore, those which denote a certain behaviour being done with a purpose; and by purpose I include all the answers one could give to the question, what was the point, aim, or intent of doing that, or to the question, what was he meaning (desiring, wishing, wanting, hoping for, trying) to do. By the use of action concepts one is able to distinguish and recognize the meaningful performances undertaken by man, those aspects of his life which have sense for him. Some examples of action concepts which are relevant to the social sciences are: voting; commanding; performing a ritual; adopting a specific role, such as that of priest or general; buying and selling; bribing; giving; saluting; promising; and signing a contract. Actions are undertaken to achieve some purpose, understood in the widest sense; action is behaviour apprehended under the heading of being directed towards a perceived goal.

For the purposes of argument, I have divided this general class of action concepts into two subclasses: conventional action concepts, by which I mean those descriptive terms which invoke social rules; and

intentional action concepts, by which I mean those descriptive terms which connote some purpose, very widely defined. The arguments in both cases are relatively the same, but, even at the risk of repetition, I think it worthwhile to see how they apply in each of the cases.

5.1.1 Conventional Action Concepts

Human social conduct is regulated conduct; that is to say, in interacting with one another in a group, the behaviour of each member is in part determined by the ideas he has as to what the other members expect of him in that given situation. A member generally conforms to these expectations because he recognizes that in some senses they are legitimate; his reason for acting in the way he does is that he accepts that the other members are entitled to expect him to act in this way. These expectations, which members recognize as legitimate, and which, in appropriate circumstances, one gives as a reason for his actions, are called rules; in social interactions, an agent acts partially out of the belief that X is the rule relevant to those particular situations.

The existence of these rules is inherent in the idea of a social relation. Indeed, the socialization process can only be understood as the moral education of its members, in that it is the process whereby individuals are instructed in how to behave, and how to expect others to behave, in certain circumstances. In fact, Society itself can in part be defined as a repository of action guiding rules. Social rules provide the general standards to be followed by the group as a whole, standards which members recognize as their duty and obligation to follow - and this because such recognition is at least one aspect of what it is to be a member of a group.

For example, upon being introduced into certain groups, one shakes hands with the other members. Being introduced is a signal for each

person to extend his arms in a particular manner, a reason for grasping the others' hands; this is because such a movement is in conformity with rules ordaining that this sort of behaviour is standard in this sort of situation. To be a member of such a group is, among other things, to recognize that handshaking is a required form of greeting and acknowledging the others' presence. To mention this rule as a reason for acting is to invoke what has been called the 'internal' aspect of social action, in which a member acts for the kind of reason others are entitled to expect him to act, and this because they are members of the same group.

Rules provide reasons for acting in a specific way precisely because they define the situations in which it is appropriate to act in the prescribed manner. In other words, rules are not only the expectations which members of the group mutually respect; they also provide the criteria in terms of which a member can identify the social situation as the one in which the specified piece of behaviour is appropriate. It is this aspect of rules that is relevant for my purposes; for it is only in terms of rules that a particular social practice can be identified as such. The existence of a rule logically constitutes the very possibility of a particular action's being said to occur.

For example, outside of the practice of law courts constituted by legal rules, it is logically impossible to describe a piece of behaviour as a criminal act. Again, if one claims he paid his taxes, one thereby invokes rules regarding the institution of government and rules of citizenship. To describe an act as an act of winning, one must already have perceived the activity as an instance of a game with specified rules, and without such an institutional framework that act cannot be so described. It is through rules that a social act is identified, for only by an appeal to rules can one even say what one is doing.

Throughout, I have discussed the concept of a rule because it is the most primitive concept in this regard; but from this it should not be concluded that my remarks pertain only to explicit laws, or to moral codes and social norms which could be formulated by members of the group. Rules constitute social practices, and practices are any type of activity whose form is defined by certain socially recognized procedures, penalties, commitments, and responsibilities. There are thus many rule-dependent notions, all of which are appropriate when describing someone as performing an assigned task or playing his part, and all of which are utilized in the social sciences to describe social action. Some of these notions are: roles; customs; institutions; functions; rites; offices; rituals; status; membership; position; and conventions. All of these, of course, are abstractions and have countless concrete applications. To discuss rules, therefore, is to discuss the basis of a broad range of social action concepts.

The point I wish to establish is this, that to describe social behaviour in terms of conventional action concepts is not merely to enumerate a set of physical facts, but involves reference to mutually held expectations which the actors share as to how people should behave. Physical events count as conventional actions only under certain conditions, and only when apprehended within the framework of an institution which constitutes the convention. To say that someone is doing X requires an understanding of the rules he is following: they provide the criteria by which one decides that X is being done.

It is this special characteristic of conventional action concepts which places them in a logical category quite distinct from that of the concepts used in the natural sciences. For precisely because these concepts require that the observer decide what rule the actor is 'obeying,'

it means that in using them he undertakes more than just to discover and to report the 'hard' physical facts, but also to make the judgment that these observed movements, in the circumstances, can be taken as an instance of following a specific rule. To adopt a particular conventional action concept as the description of a particular event requires an extra-empirical decision on the part of the observer, in which witnessed events are apprehended, in that specific context, as instances of following that rule. It is for this reason that conventional action concepts are necessarily contextually relative, and why they possess a peculiarly vulnerable nature.

This vulnerability can be witnessed in the fact that the ascription of any conventional action concept ^{can} always be debated. As 'blends'* of rules and physical facts, the assertion that X is the proper conventional action concept to describe an event can always be attacked, reduced, or nullified in light of the circumstances in which the event occurred. Argument is always possible because no set of physical facts a, b, and c can entail the ascription of the conventional action concept A, and this because exceptional factors negating the force of the rule can always make a difference. For example, any set of movements may indeed be a case of playing game A; but they might also have been performed accidentally, under duress, while drunk, by a madman, in self-defence, inadvertently, compulsively, from the threat of harm, as a joke, as an act, etc. ad infinitum, and all of these factors shift the meaning of A, some so significantly that the observer would no longer wish to use that particular description at all. These factors are relevant to the use of such

* I do not mean that the separate elements can be separated from one another and still retain their identity. We don't see a physical act and then search around for an appropriate rule, but see the act as a conventional act. The separation I imply is only a rhetorical device which allows me to examine the nature of such concepts.

concepts as mitigating or nullifying circumstances precisely because conventional action concepts involve taking into account the whole situation in which movements are made. The physical movement of extending one's arm may well be a signal that one is about to turn his automobile, but it also may be pointing to an object, gesturing, stretching, pretending to signal, and innumerable other things; to decide that such a movement is indeed a signal is to decide that, in the particular circumstances surrounding the act, we may see the movement as an instance of signalling a turn.

The so-called facts of the case, i.e. the events which can be equated with observation statements, are only evidence which the observer takes into account in judging which is the correct conventional action concept to characterize an act; physical movements are never sufficient in themselves for such a judgment, but only reasons used to help in making it. As a result, arguments as to the adoption of a particular concept can never be solved simply by closer attention to physical detail. There is always an element of discretion in the ascription of any conventional action concept because one must judge that the appropriate social rules are in force. The analogy of this kind of description to the judicial process ought to be clear; for in both cases one must decide that a given piece of behaviour Y indeed was an instance of doing X by examining the circumstances in which Y was performed in light of the criteria for doing X (i.e. the relevant rules).

Moreover, this should not be taken as a picayune point useful only to philosophers discussing the logic of certain concepts. Rules defining practices are almost never codified or explicit, and one's conception of what they consist is always in part a function of one's cultural situation and social education. People learn what sorts of actions

go with what sorts of situations by performing tasks and taking directions: it is likely, therefore, that there will be considerable variety in the way people understand the rules and the situations in which they apply. What game is being played, where one ceases and another commences, are sometimes difficult questions, and indeed society is filled with umpires whose function is to make clear to the members what in fact they are doing in certain circumstances. Priests, psychiatrists, policemen, lawyers, and teachers, as well as criminals, deviants, and students all must appreciate the fundamental disputability inherent in the use of any conventional action concept.

But it may be objected here that such arguments, while they do occur, are only verbal disputes, and that their existence hardly justifies the claim that using a particular conventional action concept involves taking a moral stand towards the agent responsible. Indeed, it may well be asserted, all words involve some sort of 'decision' in terms of criteria, and in this respect the language of social action descriptions is no different from that of the natural sciences. Arguments about the classification of an event or an object can always be settled by changing our verbal rules, or by agreeing to create a new category.

But it is here that the difference between the two cases is manifest. For, as I shall argue, the criteria involved in the use of conventional action concepts are moral criteria which reflect the moral stance of the observer toward the agents he is describing, whereas those in the natural sciences are not. I will attempt to demonstrate that conventional action concepts are not morally neutral momentarily; but first I want to be clear about the point I wish to make regarding the vulnerability of these concepts by showing how they do have this normative quality. The point is that in this case the debates whether a specific action concept

applies in a certain instance - debates which signify the vulnerability of such concepts - can never be reduced to verbal arguments about the meaning of words, but always must be understood as moral arguments, because such concepts contain a view as to what the observed agent has an obligation to do. Conventional action concepts involve more than a report of the 'facts', and they express more than a judgment as to the meaning of a word: they imply moral judgments on the agent performing the act, and this because the decision to use a particular concept of this kind involves adopting a moral stance toward him. The vulnerability inherent in conventional action concepts is a real vulnerability, because the outcome of the dispute as to which concept to adopt in describing the agent determines our moral attitude towards him.

But in order for this to be the case, I must first demonstrate how it is that, in using a conventional action concept to describe a piece of witnessed behaviour, the observer adopts a moral stance towards those whom he is describing. I have already established that a conventional action concept can only be adopted as a description of an act if the observer has decided that the relevant rules are 'in force' in the observed situation. Another way of saying the same thing is that a description of this sort rests on the observer's (unexpressed) belief that the agent whom he is describing has recognized the rules prescribed by his social group to govern the situation he is in as relevant to his situation and binding on him. For a physical movement *x* to be a conventional act *y* the agent performing *x* must be aware of, and must have accepted, the appropriate rules which define the practice of *y*, and this is precisely what is implied when an observer describes an event by employing a conventional action concept. Thus, an observer may witness an automobile driver extend his arm horizontally as he approaches a

corner, and he may well wish to describe this act as a signal that he intends to turn; but such a description implies that the driver is conforming to the rules which constitute the behaviour expected in his society when one intends to turn, and that he has 'consented' to their power over him.

But asserting that the rules are binding on him is tantamount to claiming that the agent is under an obligation to behave in the manner required by the rules. In other words, to describe an agent as having undertaken a certain conventional act, i.e. as having assented to a certain rule, is to say that he has undertaken to act in the future in the manner prescribed by the rule, and thereby to give grounds for holding that he has a duty to so act. Thus, to describe the driver as 'signalling to turn' is to say that he has an obligation to turn in the appointed manner; or, upon being informed that a person 'promised' to repay a debt within a specific time, one is entitled to proclaim that he has a responsibility to pay the money; to describe Bill as having married Jane is to say that he has assumed certain specific commitments towards her, and that he has a duty to discharge them. All of these are instances of the general case in which, because a subject is described as playing a game, we as observers have a right to hold that he has a duty to perform in a manner consistent with the rules of the game.

Indeed, the rules implicit in any conventional action description provide standards in terms of which one may judge the agent's behaviour as correct or not depending on whether it conforms to these standards. The rules which the agent accepts in acting conventionally, and which the observer invokes in describing such an act by means of a conventional action concept, also provide the criteria in terms of which others may base their assessments, criticisms, and judgments of this act. Any

deviation from the norm established by the rules offers an observer a reason which legitimizes any negative reaction he might have to such an irregularity, and provides a justification for any punishment which he may mete out because of this reaction. The observer, by offering descriptions which require the mention of rules, creates expectations in terms of which he may judge the performance as good or bad; in this way such a description mirrors the moral stance which the observer must assume toward his subjects if he is to describe them as rule following creatures.

In all of this I have been quite careful to avoid saying anything more than the agent performing the conventional action is, by the very fact of performing such an act, under an obligation to behave in the prescribed manner; I have not claimed that the weight of the standards implicit in the descriptive concept forces the observer to make a particular moral judgment about the agent, nor have I maintained that the description itself contains a moral judgment. My case is only that conventional action concepts involve the observer's adopting a moral stance towards those whom he describes in these terms. What, then, is the difference between a moral judgment and a moral stance in my terminology? An observer pronounces a moral judgment when he utters a statement which expresses his decision as to what action the agent ought to undertake; he adopts a moral stance when he places on the agent an obligation to do something, i.e. when he establishes only a prima facie case that an agent ought to do something, when he creates a set of expectations which, in the absence of countervailing moral considerations, would lead us to make a particular moral judgment. The difference between the two can be brought out by comparing the two statements 'he is under an obligation to do x' and 'he ought to do x': the first is the expression of a

moral stance towards another, the second expresses a moral judgment.

'He is under an obligation to do x, but he ought not to do it' is not a contradiction, nor does 'he is under an obligation' entail 'he ought to'; but the important point for my purposes is that 'he is under obligation' does entail 'he ought to' in the absence of other moral obligations which must be introduced to override the initial one. I am claiming that describing an act by employing a conventional action concept fixes on the agent obligations which he has simply by virtue of performing a conventional action, obligations which constrain us to make a particular moral judgment regarding his behaviour unless compelling reasons are adduced to the contrary. Thus, to say that a man is 'signalling a turn' is to say that he ought to turn in the direction indicated, unless some other moral consideration is offered. To describe a man as selling some goods is to say that, everything else remaining the same, when he receives the stipulated sum of money he ought to hand over the articles. In general terms, the fact that a man is 'playing a game' is a prima facie reason for judging that he ought to behave as the rules prescribe. It is in this way that conventional action descriptions are not morally neutral, for they create in the observers a predilection to judge the agent in a certain manner because they have affixed obligations to him, they level a 'charge' against him which must be refuted if we are not to accept the moral judgment which is implicit in such a description. The decision to describe the act in terms of a specific conventional action concept causes a moral predisposition toward the agent which will act as the standard in terms of which we will judge him unless other moral considerations are forthcoming.

This distinction between a moral stance and a moral judgment is a crucial one, for it helps me to answer what has always been taken to be

the damning objection against my view that conventional action descriptions are not morally neutral. This objection is best seen in the case in which the values of the observer are quite radically opposed to the values of those whose behaviour he is describing; for here, it has been argued, one may describe an act by means of a conventional action concept without holding that the agent ought to continue to act as the rules prescribe. For example, it is clearly the case that one may describe a Puritan as 'burning a witch' without making the judgment that he ought to continue to burn her according to the rules of witch burning appropriate to his society; in this instance the observer is able to describe a conventional act without that description expressing his valuation of it.

Hopefully, from what I have been arguing, this objection will be seen to have missed the point. For of course the observer may make an assessment of a conventional action by employing standards peculiar to his own system of values ('he ought not to burn that woman because it is cruel and inhumane punishment'): but such judgments are a step beyond the topic which is being argued here. What is at issue in the present instance is not whether one may make a moral judgment of a conventional act at variance with the obligations implicit in the act itself, but whether this act can be described as conventional without recourse to adopting a moral stance toward the agent, i.e. without creating certain moral predispositions simply by virtue of that description. Regarding this issue, that such a description does establish a moral predisposition can easily be witnessed in the fact that in order for the observer to reach a judgment which is at variance with that implied in the description of the act he must adduce further arguments which will abrogate the obligations he has already placed on the witchburner by the very act of describing him as burning a witch (to burn her according to a specified format). The

observer can nullify the duty he has imposed on the agent only by referring to other, stronger moral duties which override the initial duty inherent in the conventional action (in this case duties drawn from outside the system of the agent himself); he must destroy the obligation he himself has created by describing the act as conventional, and without this further argument this implicit moral obligation stands.

That the description itself is not morally neutral can also be seen by the fact that, if the observer does not make a moral judgment by invoking his own moral rules, and simply accepts the value system of those whose acts he is describing by reference to the rules of this system, he still may make moral judgments about the act he has witnessed in terms of the standards inherent in his description. For even if he disapproves of burning witches in all cases, and thinks that all those engaged in such acts ought to stop, he can still judge between justifiable and unjustifiable condemning and executing of witches in terms of the rules implicit in the conventional activity of witch hunting, judgments which his very descriptions entail (in the absence of countervailing considerations drawn from within the agent's moral system).

No matter whether the scientist accepts the values of those whose behaviour he is describing or not, because he describes them in terms of the rules which apply to the situations in which they live, he therefore adopts a moral stance towards them. This moral stance assumes the form of a set of prima facie duties thereby assigned to the agent in the very act of describing his behaviour as conventional, duties which provide standards in terms of which, mitigating circumstances not forthcoming, one may judge his behaviour.

Rules are the norms which members of a group accept as guides to the way in which their social life ought to be conducted. As such, they act

as the standards in terms of which members of the society enunciate claims and rights, acknowledge obligations, and assess the behaviour of other members. Thus it is that the description of observed social behaviour in terms of these rules by means of conventional action concepts presupposes a whole network of moral expectations, duties, and responsibilities which the describer impresses onto the agent in the very act of description. It is for this reason that such concepts are better thought of as appraisal concepts than as objective-report concepts; for inherent in the recognition of something in terms of such concepts is the implicit appraisal that, other things being equal, a certain action should be performed. Even as a simple observer, one's descriptions of the conventional behaviour of others cannot but reflect the moral stance one adopts towards them, for arguments about which conventional action concept to apply are moral arguments whose outcome will establish a pre-disposition about how we will assess their behaviour.

There is a further normative element contained in conventional action concepts; this is that built into them are particular criteria of success or failure. For to establish a rule is to distinguish between a right and wrong way of doing a certain piece of behaviour, and if a piece of behaviour is described in terms of these rules, then it can be evaluated by reference to them. Again, the rules cited by a conventional action concept provide a standard against which particulars falling under that description may be compared.

For example, if one signals, then he signals well or ill depending on whether others recognize what he has done; if one is leading a group in prayer, then he may be judged successful in so far as its members follow his lead, pay attention to his words, enunciate with feeling, and repeat faithfully what they hear. There are correct and incorrect ways

of voting, marrying, signing a contract, advertising, offering gifts and handshaking, and what is correct or incorrect can in part be decided in terms of the criteria established in the act of identifying a performance as a certain kind. Again, all of these examples are concrete instances of the general case of playing a game, in which observers can judge the players' performances in light of criteria inherent in the notion of the game itself.

Conventional action concepts are not neutral terms, because to identify a piece of behaviour by them, i.e. in terms of following a rule, is simultaneously to supply a test by which that behaviour can be assessed. In utilizing a specific conventional action concept, the observer is establishing the evaluative structure in terms of which he may judge the worthiness and correctness of the behaviour he is witnessing.

It is because of such considerations as these on the logical peculiarities of conventional action concepts, their vulnerability and their value ladenness, that one must conclude that these concepts are radically different from the purely observational terms used in the natural sciences. Conventional action concepts commit the observer to a certain attitude toward the agents he is observing, both in terms of what obligations, responsibilities, and commitments he assigns to them, and in terms of the standards he adopts to evaluate their actions. Descriptions in the social sciences which consist of conventional action concepts are, therefore, a species of moral description, because by adopting them one subsumes a piece of behaviour under a moral category. Moreover, because they in part reflect the moral judgment of the observer, the decision to adopt any one of these terms is always subjective. To describe social actions by employing these concepts is already to have entered a world delimited and detailed by concepts which possess a normative content, and

which therefore are fundamentally subjective in their application; conventional action concepts are a moral slicing of the empirical pie, in which the kind of cut made depends to some extent on the observer's tastes.

5.1.2 Intentional Action Concepts

In most of our dealings with other men, we treat them as purposeful and directed beings who are capable of establishing standards and goals for themselves, of actively pursuing them, and finally of achieving what they want. In our common life together, we view each other's actions as means to ends, as paths chosen, as the performing of X because Y is desired; we see men as resolving, planning and seeking creatures.* We assume that a human being moves with something in view, that he knows what he is about, and that this knowledge shapes and forms his actions. Indeed, many of the notions we use in the various transactions we engage in with others, and without which social life would be radically impoverished - including notions of praise, blame, punishment, authority, admonition, reward, responsibility, achievement, and attempt - would be inconceivable without these assumptions, since all of them presuppose that behaviour is directed toward a goal based on a decision taken by the person himself. In the practical interactions of day to day life, in the various roles, postures, and relations we adopt toward one another, in the intercourse which marks the social life of beings who make demands

* I do not wish to be overly rationalistic; we all pursue goals which we only dimly perceive, undertake courses of action we are unprepared for, often do things 'without thinking'. Nor do I wish to imply that goals are present in the mind prior to the act, and that they cause the act; this is an unwarranted assumption, and provides neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for our saying that an act is purposeful. However, it is most instructive that even with apparently incoherent behaviour we attempt to find the reasons, however obscure and unconscious, which led a person to act in these ways.

and assume attitudes towards each other, there is the basic assumption that there are connections between the separate acts of a person which give his life at least a vague coherence. These connections we call the reasons or purposes why a man does what he does. All of this may be summarized by saying that we assume that human social behaviour is meaningful behaviour, that it has a point to it.

The point of this for my purposes is that, because we perceive human doings and seekings in this way, we use what I shall call intentional action concepts to describe what it is others are doing. Intentional action concepts are all of those terms which implicitly make mention of the purpose, point, goal, reason, motive, desire, plan, wish, etc. of an act, i.e. which include as part of their meaning an answer to the question, why was that particular piece of behaviour done? The reason why such concepts are used in our descriptions of this behaviour is simply that seeing an act as part of a whole, as directed, as an instance of a certain frame of mind, necessitates that the description of that act take account of this further component of the performance in order for it to be identified as a purposeful act.

For example, to see a person as sitting with a view towards meeting his friend when the train arrives requires that, in naming this action, we tacitly mention this intention: we say that he is waiting. In witnessing one man purposely stab another with a sword, the description we give of this act will necessarily involve referring to its point: we say he is revenging (the death of his friend); assassinating (the lawful president); murdering (the victim of his machinations); ridding the country of an evil despot; playing a part in the play Murder in the Cathedral; defending his life; etc. In placing money into the hands of another, a man may be bribing him, giving him a gift, purchasing an

item, showing off his rare coin, displaying the shape of a newly minted piece, or teaching him how to recognize the foreign equivalent of a shilling; but whichever of these concepts we use to describe what it is he is doing, they all involve indicating the point of the act. To perceive an act as one done for a reason, however unconscious, is to see it as purposeful, and to see it as purposeful is to describe it in terms of an intentional action concept.

Thus, we pick out and identify purposeful behaviour not simply by describing the overt characteristics of the agent's movements, but also by mention of the goal it was the agent's purpose to achieve. Observed physical actions count as instances of a specific purpose only under certain conditions, viz. those conditions which we recognize as circumstances within which an agent may be said to be seeking that goal. To describe an agent as pursuing a certain end is to assert that he has, in some senses, framed the relevant intention, and that this intention brought, or is bringing, this end about. To describe someone as doing purposeful action X is to say more than that certain bodily movements are being observed; it is to place these movements within an intentional framework, as instances of a plan or as means to an end.

It is this aspect of intentional action concepts which accounts for their logical differences with the thing-language found in the natural sciences. For to describe an observed human performance in terms of an intentional action concept is to identify it as done for a reason, and this, in turn, means to see it as the appropriate response one would make to the situation if he were in that frame of mind. By employing such concepts we enter a world bounded by reasons and contexts, and not one marked out by cameras, taperecorders and stopwatches. An intentional action concept cannot be reduced to the impersonal terms of

empirical measurement relevant to the description of physical objects because such terms identify the meaning the act has for the actor and for those who encounter him. Thus, to describe someone as shirking his duty of helping with the work is not simply to say that we have observed that he stayed in bed and remained out of view of the foreman; it is to say that he wishes to avoid the chores he has agreed to perform, and that staying in bed is the sort of response he would make being in that frame of mind.

Because intentional action concepts involve more than the mere reporting of witnessed movements, it is possible for two pieces of behaviour to be photographically the same and yet be done in quite dissimilar frames of mind, and thus be identified as two separate kinds of action. The most dramatic example of this is the case of two events, one of which is 'real' (e.g. a real theft), and the other of which is playacted (e.g. a theft being filmed for a movie). Again, a single event may be described in many different, and sometimes incompatible, terms: as an action ordered, as a facsimile, as a parody, as a means to an end, as a practice, as a game, as a challenge, as a piece of instruction, as a performance to be applauded, as a threat, etc. Intentional action concepts can never be equivalent to a set of statements describing bodily movements because they involve judgments as to the point these movements embody.

As in the case of conventional action concepts, mention of a judgment leads directly into a discussion of the vulnerability which is characteristic of intentional action concepts. The assertion that a man is doing X is tantamount to claiming that his movements in that particular context in which he is located are warrants, in the absence of intervening factors, which justify our using a certain intentional action concept; we are so warranted because these movements are understood as the 'appropriate' ones, i.e. as falling within that range of activity

permitted by the criteria implicit in all intentional action concepts. It follows from this that all such concepts are essentially contextual (because the decision to use one must take into account the circumstances within which the deed is done), as well as being dependent on criteria (in that their use involves the mention of standards which the deed must satisfy). But it is precisely these qualities which make the use of a specific intentional action concept a debatable matter, for both the requirements demanded by the criteria, and whether the salient and distinguished features of a given event do, as a matter of fact, fall under these criteria, are indeed sources of perennial disagreement. They both call for a judgment on the part of the observer, and as with all judicial proceedings, argument with any particular decision is always possible. A single event witnessed by competent observers may be given incompatible descriptions by them because, possessing different viewpoints and conceptions of the way people behave, they interpret the meaning of the mutually observed movements in quite different ways. For example, a policeman's examination of a man's tax records could be described by different witnesses as investigating the books (implying that he has reason to suspect irregularity and is trying to establish it); as prying into them (implying he has no right to examine them and knows it); as scrutinizing them (implying he doesn't really know what he will find and is examining closely for anything); as gloating over them (implying that he has already found the evidence and is now examining them only to provoke); as leering into them (implying that he is learning secrets he will use for gossip); as playing with them (implying he is finding no irregularity, but fingers them to cover up his embarrassment), and by countless other intentional action concepts.

To determine the nature of an action is to meet a variety of criteria and to adjust to a variety of circumstances. In fact, one must take

into account a whole host of considerations. To mention but a few: the observer must inquire whether there is present a common precedent for doing X (e.g. a convention, a common practice); he must ask whether there are any abnormal physical circumstances (e.g. drunkenness; brain damage; some natural catastrophe) or unusual factors at work (making it an accident, coincidental, etc.); he must take into account the avowal of intention by the actor, the manner in which he makes it, and, if the act is a misdeed, the seriousness of the breach the claimed intention is excusing; he must investigate the background of the actor (repeated failure to perform his stated intentions? presence of various preparations and plans? past performances under similar circumstances?); and he must examine to see if there is available some presumably desirable objects or consequences which would result from doing X. This partial list should emphasize the complexity of the considerations which are involved in making a judgment as to exactly what acts a person is performing. The social scientist who attempts to describe what men are doing must decide what their purposes are and what is the meaning of their acts; but this interjects a large discretionary element into his world, because the process of deciding these issues is delicate and somewhat arbitrary, the decision ultimately reflecting in part the personal standpoint of the scientist.

As we all know from the complex ways in which we interact with one another, the overt behaviour of human beings is not transparent, immediately comprehensible upon mere inspection; nor is our social life comprised of a common system of natural signs understandable to all participating members. On the contrary, we often only dimly comprehend what another person is doing, we misread his signals, we misinterpret his gestures, the tone of his voice, the look in his eye. We misconstrue the goals he seeks and the dreams he pursues and the needs he is attempting to

satisfy. Worse than this, we often do not understand what we ourselves are after, so that we are unable to express our intentions clearly for others to hear; we often misrepresent what we do, sometimes unconsciously; and when asked, we often misdescribe the events that are our lives, selecting subtly favourable concepts which stand us in a good light.

Men are self-conscious animals, reflecting on their goals, needs, intentions and desires, as well as on the ways in which these purposes are pursued and indicated to other men. As a result of this self-critical ability, men can pretend to be doing something when they really are not, can fake the signals to one another, can bluff and deceive and trick, can misrepresent their motives and thereby immeasurably confuse and distort the ways in which they act. Moreover, because he has aspirations and ideals as a result of this self-criticism, and because he is a social creature with laws, norms, and moral codes, man is an animal who suffers guilt; and as a result, men repress their appetites, sublimate their desires, rationalize their motives, often hiding what they are doing even from themselves. Again, man is a cultural animal, inheriting from his ancestors ways of doing things appropriate to his own tribe or group; a movement or a piece of behaviour may express something quite different depending on the culture, and is only really understandable within the terms set by the whole pattern of life expressed by that culture. What I mean to express in all of these reflections is not only the sometimes extreme difficulty of grasping the point of a particular overt movement, but the vulnerability inherent in the use of any intentional action concept. For even with members of our own society, when it seems relatively clear what an agent is doing, in order to describe his actions in terms of an intentional action concept we must necessarily make a judgment which can always be debated by another

observer, including the agent himself.

Nor are the questions as to which intentional action concept to adopt merely verbal ones, soluble by scientists willing to create new categories or employ compromise formulations. For, as I shall demonstrate in a moment, intentional action concepts are value laden concepts, which is to say that they implicitly express an attitude toward the person being observed. Arguments about which intentional action concept to employ are moral arguments which can only be settled by one of the disputants making a commitment, not to the use of a word, not to a specific definition, but to a moral view of the subject, and this because the description of an act by means of this sort of concept implicitly embodies the moral stance the describer has adopted towards the agent.

In what way do intentional action concepts implicitly contain a normative content, such that they express a moral view of the agent we are describing? This may be seen in a number of ways. In the first place, there is the obvious instance where the decision which intentional action concept to apply registers the observer's attitude toward the act. For example, to describe A, as he places money in B's hands, as bribing B, rather than describing him as giving B a gift or as lobbying B, is to say that one thinks that handing money over in the context and society in which A and B find themselves is contrary to the standards accepted in that society. To describe A as giving a gift is to say that he has no ulterior purpose in so doing; to describe him as lobbying B is to say that he has a right to influence B in that way, as, for example, other pressure group representatives do; but to describe him as bribing B is to say that A is guilty of an offence in giving the money to B, because he defies the rules of the practice which govern that sort of behaviour

in that instance.* There is a whole class of intentional action concepts which is analogous to this example, composed of what might be called diagnostic verbs. This general class includes verbs which are prima facia condemnatory (e.g. murder; cheating; lieing; faking; misbehaving; offending; trespassing; brutalizing), as well as prima facia praiseworthy verbs (e.g. helping; benefitting; improving; advancing; purifying; rectifying; renovating; transcending; developing; progressing). With these verbs, rightness or wrongness is analytically related to the descriptions which the observer provides.

But this leads into a more general point. For, because all intentional action concepts at a minimum assert that an agent did something deliberately, interpreted in the broadest possible way, these concepts imply that the agent is in some sense liable for the consequences which result from what it is claimed he did. Thus, to describe an agent as doing X is thereby to ascribe responsibility (in the widest sense, to include either approval or disapproval) to him, for to be responsible is to be accountable for what one has authored. To decide what an agent intended constitutes the grounds upon which the observer can pass judgment on him, either lauding or condemning him, for it clearly demarcates which area of his social interactions he can be charged, which experiences can be placed on his record. In other words, an intentional action concept is a moral term because to describe a person in this way is to delineate the behaviour for which he can be praised or blamed.

Moreover, there is an entirely different way in which intentional action concepts are value laden. This is that such concepts contain

* As with conventional concepts, this does not mean that one thereby judges that it is wrong, but merely that it is so in the absence of countervailing considerations. It is only a prima facia moral judgment.

implicit standards whereby one can judge the agent whom one is observing. The most straightforward case of this is that wherein one can assign success or failure to a person depending on whether his alleged purpose was attained or not. For example, to say that A gave a bribe to B is thereby to say that, if B interprets it as a gift, A bungled the deed; to describe a man as searching for his lost ring is to imply that, if he does not find it, we may judge his behaviour ineffective. Intentional action concepts contain the notion of attempting to accomplish a goal, and whether we view the act as fruitful or abortive depends in part on whether this goal was accomplished or not.

There are also subsidiary cases in which one may judge, in terms established in the very act of describing a piece of behaviour by means of a specific intentional action concept, whether the act was efficient, intelligent, or correct. To describe a man as robbing a bank is also to suggest that, if he performs this act in broad daylight in front of guards with drawn guns, we would call his behaviour inefficient, his timing inappropriate, his planning faulty. To describe this same man as trying to get arrested in order to atone for some childhood guilt, is thereby to automatically reverse these evaluations. If an observer describes an apprehended enemy as attempting to conciliate his captors, but notes he has a disdainful scowl on his face, he is justified in calling such an expression unintelligent; but if instead he were described as upholding the honour of his country, we would then call this same expression brave and manly. If one is described as honouring a dignitary, we may infer that caustic remarks and obscene jokes are out of place; a different description entails a different judgment. The principle in all these cases is the same; the purpose which identifies the act also establishes criteria by which the act may be applauded or censured. The decision to use one intentional action concept rather

than another is a decision as to which standards the observer thinks ought to be applied in evaluating the piece of behaviour.

In all of these many ways the normative content of intentional action concepts reveals itself. These concepts belong to the same logical category as the conventional action concepts because they contain the attitudes with which the observer views the person or persons he is describing. In this instance, this moral stance assumes the form of what the observer feels the agent is responsible for, and in terms of what standard he feels the act ought to be evaluated by. Intentional action concepts are a species of moral notions because they express the outlook, the preconceptions, and the values of the observer to his subject. In employing them, the scientist is involved as a morally concerned person, intimately related to the people whose behaviour he is describing.

5.2 Group Concepts

By group concepts I mean all those terms used to refer to any collection of persons distinct from others because they are socially related in certain ways, and to which these individuals belong as members. Examples of such concepts are: 'community', 'family', 'clan', 'nation'; a specific church, political party, union, or club; and all those terms which indicate membership in these groups, such as 'citizen', 'clansmen', and 'father'. In this section I wish to examine the logical peculiarities of these concepts which refer to such 'social entities' or to membership in them. This requires that I examine two questions which, though intimately related, I wish to keep separate. The first (5.2.1.) of these is, what is involved in recognizing and identifying an aggregate of men as a social group (or, what amounts to the same thing looked at from the opposite point of view, what is it to identify a man as a member of a group); the second (5.2.2.) question is, how is a specific group defined?

In both cases I argue that group concepts are another species of moral notions.

5.2.1 The Recognition of a Group

The social scientist is particularly concerned with describing the interactions between men, the ways in which they relate to one another, respond to each others' presence, collaborate on common problems, negotiate disagreements, enlist cooperation, and sometimes fight and quarrel. Now many of these interactions become regularly established in the course of human affairs, so that over time a stable pattern of relationships emerges and is maintained. Men band together, forming gangs and clans, and organizing themselves into associations and communities, all which link individuals in relationships of reciprocal recognition and assistance, and in which they confront others as aliens and intruders. The basis for these stable relationships is that a system of expectations concerning what behaviour is appropriate has been mutually acknowledged as valid by the individual members. Indeed, this is what being a member of a group consists of -- having accepted the legitimacy of these prescribed ways of acting. What is called a human group is a number of individuals bound together by a system of normative rules, rules which, because they order the ways in which men are to behave, constitute the basis for these predictable and enduring relations among men.

Much of human behaviour is comprehensible only in terms of these stable rule-relationships which individuals share with a specific collection of other people, and it is in these situations that we invoke group concepts and describe actors as members of a group. We say that the group did such and such, or that he is a member of that society, and in so doing we testify that human communal behaviour would be unintelligible

apart from such group concepts. For example, in observing an event we say that two armies clashed, and we thereby indicate that the actions of individual men can only be understood in terms of the actions of everyone else, together with the rules which determine the pattern of these actions. Again, we describe an incident as one in which a policeman arrests an escaped criminal, identifying one man as a member of the society's law enforcement agency, and therefore with the power to 'arrest', and identifying the other as a member of that group which has justly been found guilty of breaking a law and put away for it. Clearly, this piece of social interaction is unintelligible without reference to the groups to which these men belong. Similarly, a host of other roles which we employ in describing social behaviour, such as father, priest, company executive, lieutenant, and teacher presuppose some fact about the organizational structure of a given society for this behaviour to be comprehensible.

To speak of groups in terms of rules, and to define membership as the acceptance of these rules, immediately situates my discussion concerning the recognition of a group into the same context as the discussion of rules which I undertook in section 5.1.1. For group concepts are essentially rule concepts, and concepts of membership are linked to rules through the notion of a role; therefore, arguments about the value ladenness of conventional action concepts which I adduced in that section are appropriate here as well.

What is involved in the recognition and identification that such and such people comprise a group? To declare that x number of individuals comprise a specific group y is to claim that these individuals have accepted, in some broad way, the conditions of membership implied by that group concept. At a minimum, these conditions of membership provide for some sort of mutual acknowledgment, attention, and cooperation among

the members, and they serve as the basis of the trust which the members share as to what one another will do, and as to what each thinks ought to be done in a certain situation. In other words, these conditions are the rules which define the rights and duties members have toward one another, the goals they should seek, and the methods permissible to achieve these goals. Without implying that acceptance is always conscious or without some kind of coercion, it may be said, therefore, that group concepts express a contractual relationship among its constituents; for to assert that a man is a member is to say that he has agreed that rules which prescribe certain kinds of behaviour and proscribe other kinds are in force, binding on him.

Thus, to identify a number of individuals as a group is to assert that certain rights and obligations are valid with respect to these individuals. Indeed, to identify a person as a member of that group is to say that he possesses certain rights and duties vis-a-vis other members, and they toward him; it is to say that he is entitled to behave in a certain way, and warranted in expecting that others will behave toward him in the appropriate manner. His status of membership, derived from his (implicit) acceptance of the contract which embodies the rules constituting the group, is his justification for certain claims on others, and for their claims on him.

One's social role, derived from his membership in a certain group, is the basis upon which his moral title is founded. For to describe a man as a member is to recognize that he has special responsibilities and privileges which accord to his position. Thus, to describe an individual as a policeman is to recognize that, as a member of a certain group, he has certain responsibilities to carry out (e.g. apprehending criminals when informed of their whereabouts, even when it involves

danger), and ought to have certain privileges accorded to him (e.g. being obeyed at the scene of a crime). To characterize a group of men as members of a club is to assert that they ought to behave as the rules of the club specify, or at least, that they ought to have good reasons for not so acting. To ascribe group membership is to demarcate that area in which special considerations ought to be accorded to an individual, considerations which must form an integral part of our moral arguments as to what should be done in a situation which affects him.

To describe an aggregate of men by employing a group concept, or to identify a person as a member of a group, is to perceive individuals in terms of social relations. But social relations are moral relations, for they involve men making claims, recognizing rights, and accepting duties and obligations. To decide that this aggregate is a group, that these individuals are indeed members, is to adopt an attitude toward them in which one establishes criteria by which to evaluate their actions. Here, how we justify, praise, or condemn an action depends to a large extent on how we describe it, i.e. whether we see the actor as acting as a member of a group, and how we understand the responsibilities implicit in such membership. It is in terms of these sorts of considerations that concepts such as antisocial, unpatriotic, treasonable, deviant, illegal, criminal, heretical, uncivic, unconformist, deviationist, rebel, and misfit, as well as their positive counterparts, gain their meaning, for they are all epithets derivative from the claim that a man is a member of a group with certain incumbant obligations therefrom.

Group concepts are a species of moral notions because they presuppose a certain value stance toward the individuals it is asserted are members of the group. These concepts are expressions of the observer's appraisal of the sort of actions and relations which ought to exist among the obser-

ved actors, the duties they should perform, the rights they all should enjoy, which type of actions should be deemed appropriate and which judged inappropriate.

5.2.2. Defining a Group

Groups are entities quite different from natural objects, for they are not spatially contiguous with precise physical contours. Rather, groups are various forms of order which make an intelligible pattern of the activities which people share with one another. Groups are not beings in the sense of measurable and palpable objects, but are systems of rules, of shared expectations, are associations of interdependent persons who have accepted a common code of behaviour. Group concepts name ways of acting which are regular and predictable because there is a cohesiveness among the actors, itself a function of the affinity in the attitudes, norms, and aspirations which they rely on in one another.

Because of this ontological fact about groups, the way we determine the nature of a group is radically different from the way we recognize physical bodies. For the assertion that an aggregate of men is a group is not merely a report that certain physical objects have been observed; rather, it is that the observer discerns certain kinds of interaction in the behaviour of those he is describing which is intelligible only by identifying these men as members of a group. The kind of intelligibility implied here I have already discussed: the behaviour of many individuals is understandable only in terms of their being members of a social group because it is comprehensible only by reference to the rules they accept as guides for their behaviour. It is for this reason that what is called a 'social whole', and who is a member of this whole, is partly a matter of the observer's own opinion, since in order to assign membership he must make the judgment that a particular person has accepted these rules and

acts in terms of them. This is the import of saying that group memberships are rule relationships.

Because of this characteristic of group concepts, the question of who is a member of a particular group is frequently a debatable matter. To describe a person as a member of a group is a tenuous business, always vulnerable to the objection that certain factors have not been taken into account or have been overemphasized, and that a mistake has therefore been made. Indeed, this can be witnessed even in groups which have an explicit constitution, and in which members, either figuratively or in reality, carry membership cards. For much of the business of clubs, churches, parties, unions, and secret societies consists of questions as to the conditions of membership, lapsed membership, excommunication, betrayal, and heresy. Questions of who is and who is not a member is a constant preoccupation even with these created groups; how much more intricate and difficult is the case with customary groups which do not have explicit criteria of membership and whose regulations are tacit.

And if one were to respond that identification of membership is not always debatable, since some clubs, churches and states do have ceremonies which insure that one is a member, I would reply that, as with signing an contract, there are/infinite number of circumstances which can nullify the force of the rite and defeat the claim of membership. It is this which gives meaning to the phrase, 'he is a member in name only', i.e. not 'really' a member. Moreover, although these prerequisites are necessary conditions of membership, very seldom indeed are they also sufficient conditions.* Thus, for example, being baptized may be a

* An exception might be, for example, the case in which an initial payment of dues automatically insures membership for life. But this is the barest and most infrequent kind of group because it requires the fulfillment of only a single obligation.

necessary condition of membership in the Roman Catholic Church, but it certainly is not a sufficient condition - one loses membership by re-marrying after divorce. Similarly, the question of who is a citizen of North Vietnam and who is not, is not a simple problem - indeed, it is probably not soluble to the satisfaction of all the contending parties. This problem is particularly acute in the case of multi-memberships, where men belong to groups which are, or become, antipathetic towards one another, such that one can no longer fulfill the duties and obligations which are incumbent upon membership. One thinks of the Communist Party and the Roman Catholic Church in this regard, or the Communist Party and citizenship in the United States in the late forties. The case is identical with a customary group, only more intractable. Who is and who is not a member of the family is very often a difficult and much disputed problem (e.g. "he is my father in name only," i.e. he is not really my father but simply the man responsible for my birth); to solve it requires a judgment on the part of the arguer with which another disputant, even with identical views as to what membership consists of, can always take issue. Fatherhood, as with all concepts of role, is a social, not a biological, concept.

Much of the time debates about membership revolve around considerations of what one takes to be the rights and duties of an individual in a particular set of circumstances; i.e. around the sorts of issues I discussed in section 5.2.1. Often, however, questions of membership largely involve issues of a different, though related, sort: namely, what one conceives the nature of a group to be. How one characterizes a specific group often decides whom one intends to include in it. Problems of group membership thus naturally lead into questions of how group concepts are defined.

Because we assume that man is a directed and purposeful creature, self-critically pursuing the goals which attract him, we apprehend social groups as human contrivances contributing to the fulfillment of some needs, wants, or desires of their members, aiding in the achievement of certain ends, means to the promotion of some good, however interpreted. We perceive that groups are functional entities, in that they serve some purpose in the lives of their members. It is this characteristic that leads to the common situation where the meaning of a group concept is given in terms of the purpose that the association it names is thought to fulfill; in other words, group concepts are often defined functionally. Moreover, when a group is defined in other ways, such as in terms of its internal rule structure, this definition still rests on, and presupposes, some conception as to the design of the group. This can easily be witnessed, as I shall show momentarily, in debates among the members of a group whether certain rules should be changed. Man's social behaviour is meaningful behaviour, and the concepts used to identify his group membership reflect the meaning the observer thinks the group has for its constituents, the role it plays in their individual lives.

This is quite obviously the case with created groups, as they have been created for some purpose: corporations have specific mandates as to growth, profit margins, and status in the community; pressure groups are associations whose purpose it is to influence legislation; the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals explicitly affirms what its job is. But the same is true of customary groups as well: the family is defined as that social unit which provides for the rearing of children and which stabilizes sexual relationships, etc. Even with groups we ordinarily define in terms of internal rules and authority structure, in times of disagreement we see that these are secondary con-

siderations resting on the more primary belief as to the function of the group; for example, today we even witness some Catholic bishops refusing to recognize the infallible supremacy of Rome because, it is claimed, such authority undermines the nature of the group, which is to lead its members into knowing, loving, and serving God through the teachings and life of Christ. We define groups by their function in the total pattern of human social life, and we do so particularly when there is some disagreement as to who is a member and of what membership consists.

Nor are rival views as to the nature of the group, and therefore the meaning of the group concept, merely part of a verbal dispute. For it is clear that such arguments involve the personal view of the observer as to what the group ought to be accomplishing. To functionally define a social group is thereby to establish criteria by which to assess the performances both of the group as a whole, and the individual members as well; to adopt a specific meaning of a group concept is to commit oneself to an opinion on what the group ought to be like and ought to do. Group concepts betray a certain view as to the purpose a group ought to play in the society of which it is a part, and in the lives of its members; such concepts imply an ideal which ought to be pursued, and in terms of which the acts of individual men may be appraised.

Group concepts are a species of moral notions not only for the reasons offered in 5.2.1. - that they presuppose a certain value stance toward the individuals it is claimed are members in terms of their rights and duties; but also because such concepts inherently contain standards by which to judge the group as a whole and its members individually. For both of these reasons, questions as to who is and who isn't a member, and disputes as to what membership consists of, demand for their solution a subjective judgment on the part of the observer which reflects his own values, and which consequently is always vulnerable to attack.

5.3 Description in the Social Sciences

5.3.1 Description

The claims I have made concerning action and group concepts employed in the description of social behaviour, and especially those remarks on their subjective character, might seem to imply a rather peculiar notion of Description. This implied notion of Description would seem odd particularly if one juxtaposes it against the theory of Description contained in the tradition of thought I sketched in Part I. In that tradition, Description is defined as the reporting of the 'facts', and the facts are conceived as publically observable physical objects, movements, and events. Building on Bacon's notions regarding bias, as well as Descartes' distinction between fact and theory, the exponents of this view propose that, as we saw, scientific description consists of the elimination of any personal viewpoint, opinion or judgment. They furthermore insist that this ideal of objective description can be achieved in the depicting of social interactions. Descriptions of social practices and social behaviour must be neutral, it is claimed, equivalent to verbal photographs; the terms employed in the social sciences are merely the replacement for the taperecorders, cameras, and the measuring rods and clocks which insure objectivity in the natural sciences. What is sought, and what is at the same time assumed to be achievable, is an empirically verifiable data language, intersubjectively transmissable among all observers; it is this language which is to serve as the foundation upon which the new science of man will be constructed.

But this theory of Description rests on certain epistemological premises which, to say the very least, require more and better argument than they have received. For what is assumed in this conception of data is that the observer is at root* a passive receptor of information

* I say 'at root' because, as we have seen, the Weberian conception of science does place emphasis on the creative probing and conjecturing about

supplied by the external environment, a patient and non-interfering recorder of the world around him, one who simply marks and measures the events which he wishes to describe. This view, in turn, rests on the presumption that there exists a body of recorded facts which is indisputable, neutral and independent of any theory whatsoever, pre-existing, as it were, the arrival of the scientific observer. On these assumptions, it is further presumed that for any observation to become part of a scientific description, to be accepted as a fact, it must be objectively recorded; this is to say that the observation must be witnessable by any competent observer in the field and reproducible in the laboratory, and in either case described by a second party in terms identical with, or equivalent to, those employed in the original description.

It is not my intention to pursue the implications of this viewpoint, nor to argue that it is misconceived; at this juncture I merely wish to suggest that there is an alternative conception of scientific description which proceeds from premises quite different from those above. What I wish to indicate here is that these unexamined assumptions which underlie the tradition of thought I discussed in Part I, and which, if accepted, might prejudice one's reactions to the case I have been making about social action descriptions, are by no means safe and secure, above reproach and accepted by all. **

(Contd.) the external environment; nevertheless, even the Weberians assume that there are facts 'out there' to be discovered, which are independent of them, and which can either verify or disprove their scientific hypotheses.

** Indeed they are the subject of a great deal of contemporary philosophical debate. For arguments advocating the conceptual nature of all 'facts', cf., e.g.: Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, esp. II, pp. 193-229; T. Kuhn The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, esp. Chap. 10; M. Polanyi, Personal Knowledge; parts of P. Feyerabend, "Explanation, Reduction, and Empiricism," in Minnesota Studies, Vol. 3; W. Sellers, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," Minnesota Studies, vol. 1; F. Waismann, "Verifiability," SPAS, 1945; J. Kovesi, Moral Notions, esp. Chap. 1, Cf., also R.L. Gregory, The Intelligent Eye for a current psychological approach making some of the same points.

This alternative view asserts that theory and fact cannot be rigidly separated, that any act of observation is already an act of cognition, and this because in observing we do not merely see something, but rather we see that something is the case. In other words, what is involved in making an observation is the grasping of the sense of the object or event we witness, and, therefore, because all observations reflect the particular person's thought about the object, they are best understood, not as mere recordings of external stimuli, but as perceptions subsumed under a particular description. Any single object or event can be identified in a variety of sometimes contradictory ways, and can have a multitude of not wholly consistent descriptions, precisely because what the object or event is, is always partly determined by the cognitive concerns and presuppositions of the person who is making the observation. The example most frequently employed to illustrate this point is a gestalt switch in perception, wherein a person may first see 'x' and then suddenly see 'y', where x and y refer to the same configuration of lines. These shifts in visual gestalt suggest that all 'seeing' is really 'seeing as' something, that all perception is, in fact, 'seeing under a particular description'. The conclusion to be drawn from considerations such as these, is that the distinction, assumed in the first theory of Description, between seeing and interpreting, between making a description (reporting a fact) and providing an explanation (elucidating the meaning of that fact, drawing an inference from it), cannot be precisely drawn because there is no one way of seeing which is 'pure', unstained by interpretation. No observation can be labelled as the primary one, as brute relative to all the others, because all observations betray the conceptual apparatus of the observer. As a result, the notion that descriptions are a class of expressions consisting of 'hard data' terms which reflect primitive observations,

neutral as between all observers, can have no basis; for all observations and descriptions are interpenetrated with, and reflect, some interpretation of the data.

Because all observation is accompanied by classification and rests on explanatory premises, there are as many ways of seeing a given set of things or events as there are ways of describing them, i.e. as there are people with different theories, training, interests, preconceptions, etc. Moreover, because to perceive is to impress on the data a structure which makes sense of the perceptions, it is fundamentally wrong to equate observation with the operation of a camera - for, understood in this way, a photoelectric cell does not really see at all. Thus, no one description is the basic one, encapsulating some fixed, neutral data which can then be variously interpreted by different scientists; all descriptions embody the conceptual paradigms of the describer. In contrast to the tradition I outlined above, this theory holds that all descriptions presuppose a fundamental orientation toward the world to be described; indeed, on this view, the acceptance of a particular conceptual framework, and the consequent working within a world delimited by a certain theoretical paradigm, constitute the very possibility of having any descriptions at all.

The existence of this alternative theory demonstrates that it is only by uncritically accepting the special doctrines of the first theory of Description that my remarks on the logical characteristics of some of the descriptive terms used in the social sciences would be a priori rejected as embodying a false notion of Description. I mention this alternative view, not because it must be true in order for my claims about action and group concepts to be true, but rather because I wish to emphasize the assumptions implied by the theory of Description propounded by the theorists in Part I, and because I want to demonstrate the affinity

my case possesses with the assumptions which characterize a rival theory of Description.*

Moreover, even if sense perceptions were 'pure', and descriptions composed of sense-data were free from the taint of theory, it does seem arbitrarily restrictive to confine what is to count as a valid description to sentences composed wholly of terms whose referents can be physically observed and measured. For descriptions are linguistic performances whose purpose is to inform the listener, to convey to him what something is like, to give an account of an event, to acquaint him of an object's or person's characteristics. How a description fulfills this purpose depends to a large extent on who is describing and who is listening, their interests in the case, their reasons for wanting to hear about the event, and their beliefs as to what is important, revelatory, or merely trivial. Descriptions often proceed far beyond the mere reporting of physical detail, because it is often not that sort of information which is important or desired; descriptions also usually involve more than the mere classification of an object or event into already

* I feel I may be misunderstood here. These remarks are about Description in general; they do not represent all that I have to say about the description of human behaviour, and, in fact, they apply to the description of both natural and social phenomena. In themselves they obviously do not entail the conclusion it is the purpose of this chapter to establish, viz. the moral presuppositions implicit in the action and group concepts which social scientists use to describe social behaviour; to this issue I will return in 5.3.2. The function of the remarks here (5.3.1.) is merely to demonstrate that it is possible to hold that all 'facts', including those of the natural sciences, reflect conceptual presuppositions, and that such facts - contrary to the claims of Bacon and Descartes and those who follow them - can still count as 'legitimately scientific' even though they rest on certain theoretical assumptions.

This section is intended to 'soften up' the opposition by showing that even the facts of the natural sciences may be 'subjective' in the sense of resting on assumptions which are determined partly by the interests and paradigms with which the scientist approaches his matter. It then might be easier, or at least less startling, for me to show that the 'facts' of the social sciences, besides being conceptually subjective, are also subjective because they rest on the moral views of the scientist, that his assumptions are not only theoretical but moral as well.

established pigeon-holes, for to say what something is like often involves indicating to what class of objects it is nearest, and this means introducing comparisons and contrasts. Descriptions are complex acts which include sentences and words of all kinds organized for the purpose of communicating a picture; because they often contain more than reports of empirical facts, we seldom characterize a description as either true or false - although we often characterize statements within a description in this way - but rather by such adjectives as apt, graphic, appropriate, full, detailed, accurate, misleading, fair, inconsistent, or balanced. In giving a description we often do more than 'cite the facts', and what is a fact and what isn't varies from context to context. In all cases we gather together certain features and aspects of the world and of ourselves and of our activities, but in different cases we do this for different reasons, in different ways, and with different results. There can be more than one description of something, which description given depending upon one's interests, and the kind of terms employed in a description is primarily a function of the job that description is intended to accomplish.

These general remarks on Description are particularly relevant to the description of social behaviour. For, as we have seen, because social behaviour is meaningful, the descriptions of this behaviour necessarily involves terms which embody explanatory elements. With respect to human doings, we observe actions and describe them by employing action concepts, and we observe men acting as members and we describe them in terms of group concepts; in both of these instances, we recognize and identify a piece of behaviour by subsuming it under a certain framework, and although we may not explicitly mention them in the description, we describe witnessed events in terms of our ideas about these events, what we take their

purpose to be, what we interpret as their reason or point. To recognize a piece of behaviour as a response to certain rules, as a move in one of the complex games which comprise social relations, as a performance intended to achieve some goal, means describing it in terms of a specific action concept; and to identify some individuals as interacting with one another as members of some social organization requires that they be described in terms of some group concept. Action and group concepts are not reports of purely empirical happenings, they do not mirror the world of raw data; but the reason why we adopt them to give a description in the social sciences is because only they can inform the listener what social acts a person is performing.

For the social scientist, it is only the 'world' demarcated by these descriptive concepts, those with an explanatory content, which is revelatory; and thus his descriptions are filled with such terms. For example, to describe a person mouthing a stream of sound by mentioning the tone, frequency, rhythm, pitch, and volume of the notes ushering forth may be a worthwhile description of this event for a physiologist intent on correlating the size of vocal chords with their output; but in so far as the social scientist apprehends this activity as a meaningful act that one man is making towards another, such a description will not be useful: for he is interested in the act described as the speaking of a language, and in so doing will be utilizing explanatory-descriptive terms which embody his ideas about this observed behaviour (that it follows rules; that it is understood by members of a certain group; etc.). The point is that neither of these sorts of description is more primitive or more important than the other; each reflects the purposes and needs of the job to be done. It certainly does violence to the sense of 'Description' to proclaim that a sentence like, 'he is speaking

the Swahili language,' is not a descriptive sentence at all, simply because it contains terms ('speaking'; 'language') which cannot be reduced to the measurable thing language of neurophysiology.

Descriptions are called upon to do a variety of tasks in a variety of different subject areas, and the attempt to legislate that only certain terms are permissible in any worthwhile description, in this case the so-called objective terms of physical science, is a piece of arrant dogmatism. Worse than this, such a view is self-defeating, since it eliminates from the social sciences precisely those terms - action and group concepts - which are necessary in order to describe those aspects of human life in which these sciences are interested. In the social sciences, Descriptions are of a different order from that proclaimed as the ideal by those intent on emulating the natural sciences, but this is not a good reason for dismissing such accounts as inferior descriptions, or for rejecting them as not really being descriptions at all.

It remains to consider exactly how action and group concepts do embody the observer's ideas about those whom he is describing, and how they do so in a way that the simple reporting of bodily movements or the measuring of neuron synapses does not. For regardless of whether the 'facts' of the physical sciences incorporate a specific theory or not, the 'facts' of the social sciences identified by action and group concepts are subjective, and this can be demonstrated irrespective of the case regarding physical facts.

All social behaviour, precisely because it is social, is contextual in character, meaning that it is the circumstances within which a certain act is performed that justifies one description of it rather than another. Behavioural accounts, which are verifiable and publically recordable, can never serve as necessary and sufficient conditions for the adoption

of a specific action or group concept in describing social behaviour, for our descriptions of a man as doing X or being a member of Y must always take into account the relevant features and aspects of the situation within which the piece of behaviour was observed. In one context a specific gesture may be one of anger, in another, one of shame; depending on the surrounding circumstances, it may also be an act of resentment, embarrassment, impatience, or vexation, a provoking manoeuvre to pick a fight, a bit of playacting to gain one's will, or a defensive reaction covering up insecurity, and an indefinite list of other things. In one situation a man may be a member of a group, but looked at from another point of view he may be a heretic or a traitor or not really a member at all; two observers, given the same aggregate of men and the same circumstances, may characterize them in two quite incompatible ways. Similarly, all attributions of this sort involve an interpretation by the observer of the person's behaviour, an interpretation in which the agent's physical movements provide only one reason out of many for giving one description rather than another. No report of a particular physical action can ever entail the ascription of a specific action or group concept, for the adoption of such concepts necessitates that the observer view the physical action in a distinctive light.

The world described by means of action and group concepts is a world involving contexts, criteria, justifications, and reasons, a world of evidence and judging, not of recording or photographing. A man utters the words 'I promise' - but can we describe him as having promised? Perhaps. But perhaps also he is justifiably lying, or too drunk to care, or insane, or under some threat, or joking, or acting in a play, or an infinite number of other possibilities. To choose one description rather than another means interpreting the recorded verbal performance

in the light of the situation in which it took place, together with the criteria for deciding that such and such is a promise, and making the judgment that it is one sort of act rather than another. It means seeing the behaviour as one type rather than as another, and this kind of 'seeing' is not like that which a chemist does when he observes his experiments, but is rather more like that which a judge does when he decides that a man did steal the tomatoes, and not just take them with a view to paying later. Descriptions employing action and group concepts contain elements not only of discovery, but of decision as well, and for this reason they are always vulnerable to dispute, which contexts justifying which descriptions being a source of interminable argument. Both the criteria of application for using an action or group concept, as well as the range of the circumstances which can count as appropriate for the doing of x or being a member of y, are open textured, impossible to specify completely, and thus always debatable.

In the world of social descriptions, delimited by action and group concepts, a sharp separation between fact and theory, between observation and interpretation, cannot be drawn. Descriptions of human affairs must be intermingled with explanations because the observer is depicting an activity or a process which, by its nature, demands connections between specific behaviours in order for there to be a coherent account of it. All such social 'facts' are facts only within an already accepted framework which acts like a tissue connecting the various physical performances. Seeing actions and groups is to see behaviour as something, and it is thus that one's attitude becomes an integral part of the description he offers.

It is in this way that some of the descriptive terms employed in the social sciences are subjective, incorporating the opinions of the

observer regarding the behaviour he is describing, revealing, and at the same time depending upon, the paradigms of human action which comprise his attitudes toward, and comprehension of, his fellow men. Nor is this subjectivity, expressed in arguments concerning which descriptive term to employ, merely a verbal matter; for there is another facet of these terms (to which I will return in a moment) - their normative content - which dictates that such arguments really are moral in nature. The paradigms which inform the facts of social science are not merely conceptual, as I have been claiming in this section, but evaluative as well; for this reason the action and group concepts adopted to describe social behaviour really are a species of moral notions. It is this last point which I now wish to examine.

5.3.2. Social Actions as Moral Notions

I have tried to demonstrate that action and group concepts express our moral attitudes toward those whom we describe, and that they do so in a variety of ways. The decision to adopt a specific conventional action concept, for instance, is based on the observer's opinion as to what pattern of behaviour the agent prima facie ought to follow; moreover, in adopting this kind of descriptive term, he also establishes the evaluative structure in terms of which he may judge the correctness and worthiness of the behaviour he is witnessing. Again, the decision to employ one intentional action concept rather than another is a decision as to which standards the observer thinks ought to be applied in evaluating that piece of behaviour; such a decision also rests on a judgment as to what the agent is accountable for, because intentional action concepts assign responsibility. And lastly, to determine that one man is a member of a group, or to describe an aggregate of men by means of a

group concept, is to establish the rights and duties these individuals have toward one another, and sometimes toward those outside the group as well; at the same time, it also is to set the criteria by which one can assess the performances of the members, either individually or as a unit.

There is a common thread which runs throughout this diversity, however; for, at bottom, all these terms express some sort of appraisal of the behaviour which is being observed and described. These appraisals are present in one of two general ways: either in providing criteria by which to assess the success or failure of the act, or in assigning certain obligations, commitments, or responsibilities to the actors. In both of these ways, the observer is intimately related to the human beings he describes, for in describing them he is expressing his attitude towards them, assuming a stance towards their behaviour. It is for this reason that action and group concepts possess a normative content: they act as a challenge to the person described to bring more facts into the case, for otherwise one cannot avoid the moral judgments implicit in them.

Because they are not explicitly mentioned in the term, the moral criteria and content of these concepts may often be hidden from view; this is because the function of these terms is primarily descriptive, to convey information about the person's activities, to disclose the nature of an event to the listener. Indeed, this may be an explanation why this characteristic of action and group concepts has gone relatively unnoticed. But there is another explanation which is more pertinent to the social sciences; this has to do with the conventional assessments which most members of a given society make toward each others' actions. For in so far as the evaluative standards and attitudes implicit in an

action or group concept are taken for granted, these normative aspects recede into the background and go unnoticed. Because a set of physical movements is so firmly rooted in custom and so widely accepted, it is taken as 'natural' and 'self-evident' that it is an instance of playing a certain role or enacting a certain performance; and because these roles and performances are pervasive throughout a society, its members automatically assume a certain stance toward the person described in these terms without realizing it. For example, because bending and smiling are invariably identified as bowing, i.e. as showing deference, we forget the subjective character of such terms, forget, that is, until we encounter someone for whom these physical actions do not mean the same thing, for example, an Oriental. Moreover, failing to appreciate the subjective character of such descriptions, and the moral conclusions inherent in them, can prove to be a severe mistake: how much of Western foreign policy has been formulated on the supposition that the East respects force and authority, a supposition perhaps partly resting on mis-descriptions of Oriental diplomats as continuously bowing?

This same conventionalizing process can be seen in the case where a particular role or custom is taken for granted in a society. It may seem that describing a man as a doctor is a matter of straightforward empirical fact, a natural and easily decidable matter. But such a description simultaneously entails that one ascribe certain rights to that person (the right to advise the sick and prescribe medicines unavailable to the general public, e.g.), and that one confer certain obligations upon him (e.g. that he answer the calls of the sick even if they cannot pay). But because it implies rights and obligations, such a description involves the making of a moral judgment.* This can easily be seen in

* I do not mean to imply that it is only a moral judgment, or that the decision is made simply on moral grounds.

the fact that we wish our doctors to be certified by a group whom we entrust to make the proper evaluation. Indeed, even though they make claims similar to 'real' doctors, and possess skills in the healing of illnesses, our society refuses to describe either psycho-analysts or chiro-practors as doctors - although some members do - which is to say that we refuse to grant them the rights and privileges which constitute that role. It might be objected here that whom we describe as a doctor is merely a matter of reporting on a verbal convention: 'he is called a doctor by everyone in our society, and therefore he is a doctor'. But to describe a man as a doctor is more than to report on a verbal practice; 'he is called a doctor' is different from 'he is a doctor', the difference consisting precisely in the recognition of certain rights and the assigning of certain duties implied by the latter. To describe a man as a doctor because everyone in the society describes him in this way is simply to ratify the evaluations which this society has made. This point can be brought home in noticing that when we describe primitive cultures we qualify the descriptions conventionally employed in those places by describing a man as a witch doctor, i.e. someone who is not 'really' a doctor, and whom we would not incarcerate for malpractice because his incantations did not heal his patient.

These observations on the conventional character of many action and group concepts have special significance for the social sciences because a great deal of human behaviour, including valuational behaviour, is regular and predictable, conforming to a stable pattern. Moreover, many of the concepts employed in these sciences have gained their meaning in the context of Western Industrial Society, with the values, norms, preconceptions, and assumptions peculiar to, and predominant in, such a society. Both of these factors combine to conceal the normative element

implicit in the action and group concepts used by the social scientist to describe social behaviour, thereby fostering the illusion that his descriptions employ scientific terms, when in actual fact they are largely composed of moral notions. That they are so, and that he is under an illusion, can easily be seen in the case where these conventional attributions no longer exist, as in a time of passionate argument about the goals and values of a society, or in a discussion between members of radically different cultures. For at such times, it is extremely difficult for there to be any communication about the social world in question, and this because their descriptions, shaped by different normative paradigms, characterize literally different worlds. In these situations, the descriptions provided by the social scientist, once presumed to be 'neutral' and 'objective' because the parties accepted many of the same values and worked within relatively identical frameworks, now suddenly appear unfair and biased; in fact, sometimes the discrepancy becomes so great that there arises doubt as to whether the disputants are describing the same situation! To hear a Marxist sociologist and a liberal sociologist describe the political situation of a given country; to read the accounts of Harlem given by a Black and then by a White political scientist; to compare the rival portrayals of tribal rites provided by anthropologists and the natives: to witness these and similar confrontations is to encounter incisive instances of this aspect of the description of social behaviour.

To describe social behaviour by employing action and group concepts is already to have taken a moral stand toward those whom one is observing; thus, such descriptions do not consist of 'objective' facts at all. But this does not mean that there could be a purser description of social behaviour, a description which only contained empirical facts. These

concepts, though they express moral attitudes, are not evaluations on 'facts' which could be described in other, more primitive terms; rather, they are the concepts which are appropriate to the description of the interactions and social doings of human beings living with one another. Social relations and personal actions are situations definable only in terms of the observer's interests, attitudes, and values because he must describe them by utilizing concepts which invoke rules, purposes, commitments, and responsibilities. To apprehend man as a peculiarly social creature, following rules and pursuing ends, is to apprehend his behaviour in terms of moral categories; therefore, to describe his behaviour by employing terms which invoke this social quality involves reference to our beliefs as to how (at least prima facie) the agents should behave, opinions on the social rights they enjoy and duties they ought to fulfill, and views as to what constitutes the proper way of doing whatever it is we decide they are doing. These utterances are the means by which we determine what it is men are up to, and the method by which we communicate what they are doing; they are descriptions of behaviour. But these descriptions are not equivalent to 'reporting the facts', if by facts one means empirical terms translatable into measurable physical movements; these 'facts' encapsulate moral views of and about the parties concerned: they are facts cast in a moral or appraising light.

The upshot of this is that much of the nomenclature of the social sciences is moral nomenclature, and the world which the social sciences attempt to explain is a world partly created by the values of the particular scientist. The boundaries of the social sciences, which enclose that area about which they intend to offer explanatory theories, are set by the moral orientation the observer possesses toward those whom he is informing us about. The very core of the social sciences, the aspect

of reality they hope to understand, the ground upon which they work, is delimited and detailed in large part by the moral views and evaluations which are peculiar to the particular scientist who is making his observations and constructing his theories.

As a consequence of this, we must reject the claim that the social sciences are, or can be, value-free, the ethically neutral foundation for a scientific, objective reconstruction of society. For the very subject matter of these sciences defeats such a claim.

6. The Explanation of Social Action

The confusion and barrenness of psychology is not to be explained by calling it a 'young science' ... for in psychology there are experimental methods and conceptual confusion ... The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by.

L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, II, xiv

Science consists of more than the mere description of the world by objective and impersonal techniques and procedures: it is also fundamentally concerned to explain the phenomena it observes. In fact, the desire for explanations which are both systematic and controllable by factual evidence is one of the primary generating factors of the scientific enterprise. And a distinguishing feature of all scientific inquiry, when it is successful, is the existence of a set of general propositions which link superficially unrelated phenomena in an ordered and predictable manner. As I was careful to mention then, this fact was recognized by all the thinkers I discussed in Part I, even the empiricists; and although many social scientists have been, and unfortunately still are, content to spend their careers in a process of 'data-gathering', many of these do so not because they believe that this is all that science amounts to, but because they hope that some genius of the stature of Newton will one day appear to construct a theory which will incorporate the vast amount of information they have collected into some system of explanatory laws and theories. The sciences seek to discover and to formulate in general terms the conditions under which events occur, and the statements about these various conditions are the explanations of these happenings; their goal is the organization of human knowledge on the basis of explanatory principles of a high general order.

In Part I, I distinguished three types of explanation characteristic of the social sciences, and in this chapter I wish to analyze each of them

in turn. Section 6.1 investigates verstehen explanation; section 6.2, causal explanation; and section 6.3, functional explanation. In each of these sections my object is the same, to demonstrate that each of these explanatory types cannot offer explanations of human social behaviour independently of the personal values of the scientist who is proposing them, that their truth and usefulness cannot be ascertained without reference to the hopes, fears, and assumptions as to what is right and good in human life of the person who is offering an explanation of social life. I want to argue that they are, indeed, all species of moral explanation.

6.1. Verstehen Explanations

6.1.1. The Role of Verstehen Explanations in Social Science

Verstehen explanations are explanations of human action in terms of the purposes, goals, motives, intentions, needs or wants of the agent involved.* They are sometimes referred to as 'Rational Explanations'; however, I have decided to keep the German term for two reasons: one is that this practice is followed in most of the social scientific literature; the other, and more important reason is that the Germanic form immediately suggests its historical roots. For the person most responsible for introducing the concept into contemporary social science was Max Weber**, and it is in

* Each of these concepts is used to explain, justify, interpret, and identify different stretches of human behaviour in different ways for different purposes; I do not mean to suggest, by lumping them all together, that these differences are insignificant. However, it is with the logic of this type of explanation with which I am concerned here, and for this purpose it is not necessary to discriminate among them.

Moreover, I also wish to warn that I do not intend to argue the issue of exactly which mental concepts fall within the category of verstehen explanations and which fall within the category of causal explanation (a category I will examine in due time). In some contexts this is a vital question (as in the question of whether desires are causes of action); but here I do not wish to examine over what area the category of verstehen explanation extends; instead, I want to ask the more basic question, what is its logical form.

** The idea is not original with Weber, of course; he was following the lead of Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey himself was in a tradition of thought which included Vico and Hegel.

what I have called the Weberian Tradition that one finds the claim that there is a kind of explanation peculiar to the human studies which is an essential ingredient in any attempt to understand human social behaviour. What I have called the Empiricist Tradition, for what I hope will become obvious reasons, has never admitted such a need.

Weber thought that because human behaviour is meaningful, because it has a point to it, in order to understand it one had to grasp the significance an act had for the actor who performed it, i.e. one had to see how it fit into his plans or satisfied some of his needs or wants. Because there is an interior and mental aspect to human action, Weber believed that such 'understanding' explanations were a necessary and integral part of any social science. However, he took great pains to demonstrate that such a science could not consist of this type of explanation only; moreover, he did not believe that this 'empathetic intuition' of the emotional and cognitive states of others was of itself knowledge. For Weber, verstehen explanations could only constitute true knowledge when one had discovered objective, publically observable evidence expressed in causal laws to support one's assertion that a specific subjective state was a causal determinant of a person's behaviour.¹ Verstehen explanations help us to discover the internal events which cause an agent's actions; they are, therefore, of the same type of explanation as other causal explanation.² But since these causes are hidden from us, locked in the agent's logically impenetrable mind, it is necessary both to devise methods of re-living others' lives, and at the same time to insist that such causal factors

1. cf., e.g., Methodology, pg.176.

2. "The distinction that the 'inward' aspect of the action which is to be analyzed is directly given to her in her own memory, whereas we must 'interpret' the action of a third party from the 'outside', is, despite the naive prejudice to the contrary, only a gradual continuous difference in the degree of accessibility and completeness of the 'data'." Methodology, pg.179-180.

must be buttressed by straightforwardly empirical causal evidence if they are to play a part in the total explanation of a human act.

By combining verstehen and causal explanations, emphasizing both their similarity and especially the need for supporting verstehen explanations by causal laws, Weber hoped to achieve a synthesis between German Idealism, which stressed the need to understand the 'internal' aspect of human action, and the Positivist Tradition, which insisted that a social scientist must give a genuinely objective and impersonal account of human behaviour fundamentally identical to that found in the natural sciences. Weber united the two by arguing that Verstehen explanations are a necessary component of our understanding of human behaviour, but that of themselves they did not constitute true knowledge; verstehen explanations, which isolated and identified mental causes, must themselves be validated by empirical causal laws.¹

While there have been some notable exceptions to the general rule,² social scientists have almost universally rejected this Weberian synthesis; for, in general, they have dismissed Weber's claim that verstehen is a constituent and necessary part of the knowledge of another's actions. What they have been willing to recognize is the value verstehen possesses as a means by which true scientific knowledge can be achieved; verstehen has been rejected as a form of explanation, but has been accepted as a method of understanding, a heuristic device.³ Whether this revision of Weber's

1. For an account of Weber's methodology in these terms, cf. Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action, pgs 579-640.

2. e.g. The work of Cooley, Sorokin, McIver, W.I. Thomas, and G.H.Mead.

3. That this is a rejection of Weber's position can be seen by comparing it to this remark in the Methodology, pg.135: "For the meaning of history as a science of reality can only be that it treats particular elements of reality not merely as heuristic instruments but as objects of knowledge, and particular causal connections not as premisses of knowledge but as real causal factors." This demotion can be found in innumerable places; cf. Richard Rudner, Philosophy of Social Science, pgs.70-73, 78-83; Ernest Nagel, The Structure of Science, chap.13, part 4, esp pgs.480-485. The most often cited and clearest article on this matter is, T. Abel, "The Operation Called Verstehen", American Journal of Sociology, 54, (1948-1949), pgs.211-218.

thought is coherent or correct does not concern me at the moment; here I simply wish to indicate that as a body social science disowns this kind of explanation. The effect of this on my thesis is to make this section (6.1), which attempts to demonstrate that verstehen explanations are a form of moral explanation, almost unnecessary, not to say irrelevant.

Indeed, I would have happily omitted this section if it were not for two important considerations. The first of these is that the arguments which have led most social scientists to reject verstehen as a form of explanation assume certain Dualist doctrines about the relationship between Mind and Body which have recently been the object of the severest - many would say fatal - philosophical attacks; when one drops these Dualist assumptions, much of the force of the contemporary criticism of verstehen is then lost. But even more important from my point of view is that, stemming from these attacks on the philosophical assumptions of most social scientists, there has arisen another account of the logic of verstehen explanations, an account which both avoids questionable doctrines of the human psyche, and, at the same time, which satisfies the canons of objectivity which most social scientists endorse (that only empirically verifiable events can count in a scientific explanation.).¹

To be more specific: verstehen explanation has been rejected because it was assumed, even by its proponents (such as Dilthey, Weber, and Collingwood), that it required the scientist to enter the mental world of the actor and there to 'observe' the mental causes which forced the person to act as he did; but, it was argued in response, attempts to 're-live' the

1. The relevance of this new account of verstehen to a science of man, and its compatibility with strictly scientific canons, can be seen in, e.g., May Brodbeck, "Meaning and Action", Philosophy of Science, vol 30, no.4, (October, 1963); Carl G. Hempel, Aspects of Scientific Explanation, pgs. 457-489. Its clearest exposition is in, Patrick Gardiner, The Nature of Historical Explanation, pgs.46-51 and chapter 4. This all stems, of course, from Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind, esp chapters 4 and 5.

life of, and 'empathetically identify' with, the persons whose actions one wished to understand are fundamentally unscientific. While these excursions into another's psyche might be one useful device out of many to help locate the causes of his behaviour, they certainly could not provide legitimate knowledge about his behaviour, for how could a scientist worthy of the name propose some kind of mystical union as part of his methodology, and imply that invisible, unwitnissable, mysterious forces were causal agents? To critics of verstehen explanation, the Weberians and others had obviously made a mistake in classification; for they had confused the manner at arriving at hypotheses with the grounds for holding them. Verstehen was a heuristic device, not a type of explanation at all.

However, contrary to the practice of both the protagonists and the critics of verstehen explanation, it is not necessary to make assumptions about spiritual processes in order to provide a coherent account of it. One may take all of these so-called mental events which were thought of as interior causes of behaviour, and relocate them in another logical category; mental concepts then become concepts which explain and describe the observed behaviour of man, not concepts which name invisible and interior events. In making this relocation, one places all those concepts which it was assumed referred to internal, mental worlds into a different class, namely, the class of concepts which single out the salient features of observed human actions. Mental words such as desire, will, intention, and motive are no longer conceived as descriptions of invisible antecedants to observed behaviour, but are understood to be the terms we employ to mark out the contours of the behaviour we encounter. Thus, they do not identify items in the world of events, but are part of our descriptions of this world; they belong, not to the sphere of the actor, but to the sphere of the observer. Now, if such a strategy is followed, then the objections of the social scientists, which assumed a causal account of mental concepts, are

no longer relevant; their criticisms are based on a misconception of what it is they reject.

Moreover, accompanying this category shift in the status of mental concepts is an alternative account of the logic of verstehen explanation, one which social scientists might well find agreeable. For instead of being thought of as reports of intuitively apprehended mental causes, they are now taken to be dispositional explanations of the empirically observed behaviour of the actors. This is to say, that an individual piece of behaviour is explained by fitting it into the pattern of the previously observed behaviour of the same agent, and that we feel satisfied with such an explanation because we see how this act accords with the tendencies we have already come to understand characterize this actor. For example, motives become, not names for occult processes, but words to describe the kind of behaviour typical of this agent in this and similar circumstances; thus, 'John bolted from the room because of fear' means, not that we have intuited the invisible cause of his behaviour, namely fear, but that we can understand his behaviour as an instance of how John can be expected to behave under such conditions. Verstehen explanations do not consist of some magical process whereby one 'becomes' the person whom one is trying to understand, nor are they reports of imperceptible forces intuitively observed; rather, they are simply the fitting of one piece of empirically observed behaviour into a form established by observing the reaction of the agent in reasonably equivalent situations.

I said that this new account of verstehen explanation would be more amenable to social scientists, even though it undermines their earlier criticism of such explanations. The reason for this ought to be clear; for it situates verstehen explanations roughly into the general account of explanation which scientists usually adopt - the subsumption of a particular case under a general law; and, more importantly, it makes such

explanation compatible with a purely 'external' viewpoint which admits only empirically verifiable statements into its explanations. Verstehen explanations are translated into the language of the observation of overt behaviour, the language of science.

The position I have established so far may be summarized as follows: either one assumes a Dualistic account of the human person, thereby conceiving of verstehen explanations as providing intuitively grasped mental causes: in this case, this section of the thesis is irrelevant, since, having made such assumptions, the vast majority of social scientists then quite rightly reject verstehen as a legitimate form of scientific explanation, and there is no reason for me to argue on as if they accepted it; or, alternatively, one drops these two-worlds assumptions, thereby emasculating the traditional objections to verstehen: in this case it is incumbent upon anyone wishing to claim that verstehen explanations are a form of moral explanation, as I do, to investigate the new logical status which results from removing mental concepts from the category of words which refer to non-physical events of which certain physical events are supposed to be effects and placing them into the category of words which attribute certain characteristics to observed behaviour. In this investigation I must keep a special eye to ascertaining whether a dispositional account of verstehen, which does seem to be straightforwardly empirical, is adequate.

Earlier I said that there were two reasons why I thought it necessary to include this section on verstehen explanation. The second reason why I felt compelled to do so stems from what I wrote in chapter 5 about the description of human behaviour. For if what I wrote there is correct, and if, therefore, it is the case that any social science (at least as that body of knowledge is now defined) necessarily assumes that man is a rule-following and purposeful creature, and thus necessarily describes his behaviour by means of action and group concepts, then ipso facto I have

provided a reason for believing that verstehen explanations cannot be eliminated from the social sciences. The reason for this is that the use of action and group concepts excludes the possibility that a purely mechanical account in terms of cause and effect can serve as a sufficient explanation in itself of human behaviour. It is worthwhile, I think, to see why this is so.

As I indicated in chapter 5, to employ action and group concepts in the description of human behaviour is to assert that this behaviour was done for a reason, is to see it as performed in order to fulfill some purpose, however widely that term is interpreted. But this kind of description, I now want to argue, implies that only a special kind of explanation can satisfy us in providing an account of this behaviour; this type of explanation assumes the form of an answer to the question, what was the purpose of doing that? To describe a piece of observed behaviour by means of an action concept is to assert that it was something done, that it was a directed move, an intended step, a motivated exertion, a desired movement, etc; it is to deny that it was a simple response, something that just occurred (accidentally; unwittingly; without choice; by chance; involuntarily; coincidentally; etc.). But to offer such a description is simultaneously to prejudice the case, as it were, so that only a certain kind of explanation can ultimately satisfy us; for, knowing that the piece of behaviour was an act performed, in trying to explain it we require to know how it furthers the actor's interests, how it satisfies his needs or wants or fulfills his desires, or some such account which answers the question 'why?' according to the general form of 'in order to'.

Indeed, the case is even stronger than this; for to describe a piece of behaviour as directed is thereby also to assert that only a certain kind of explanation - one which informs us what the agent was up to - is even compatible with the original description of it as an action. For

example, to describe a man as jumping off the ledge of a building, rather than as falling off it, is thereby to rule out a purely mechanical account in terms of cause and effect as an explanation of such an action. In asking, why did he jump?, we are demanding an answer which is of the type, 'he wanted to end his life', or 'he was showing off to his girl friend', or 'he was testing his bravery'. If the answer is given, 'the wind blew him off', 'he slipped', or 'he was forced off by the impact of the bullet which struck him', we thereby reject the original description as incorrect. 'Jumping', as well as other action concepts, is compatible with only a certain kind of explanation which I am calling verstehen, and as long as social science is conceived as attempting to provide explanations for why people jump, as well as why they vote, marry, murder, pray, and give gifts, then this form of explanation is relevant to such a science.

I do not mean to imply that only verstehen explanations are relevant to an account of human actions, and that causal* and functional explanations of both the physical and social variety are inappropriate here; such a conclusion proceeds far beyond what I have claimed. All I have maintained is that these other forms of explanation cannot be sufficient to explain human action, for to explain an event simply in these terms is thereby to remove it from the realm of action and relocate it in the realm of physical movement, i.e. in the realm in which general laws explain what just happens. For an action is, by definition, something done for a purpose, reason, motive, etc.; actions are moves which the agent makes; therefore, they cannot be explained without reference to the carrying through of some socially established and recognized practice, or some individual motive, intention or desire, and this precisely because without reference to these sorts of

* As we shall see in section 6.2., when one adopts an action point of view the nature of causal explanation with respect to human behaviour changes in meaning.

considerations one empties the action concept of all its meaning, one refuses to recognize the very character of the act which one singled out by employing an action concept in the first place.*

It is for this reason that I wish to investigate the logic of verstehen explanations. My account of social science as attempting to explain human social action which I began in chapter 5. requires that I do so, for the very nature of action demands explanations in terms of purposes, desires, intentions and motives. Moreover, if I have been right in arguing that it is a necessary condition that a social science employs action concepts, and if what I have claimed regarding the logical connection between action concepts and verstehen explanations is correct, and if, furthermore, I now proceed to demonstrate that verstehen explanations are a form of moral explanation, I have thereby demonstrated that social science, in so far as it offers a full explanation of human social action, must be at least partially value-laden.

6.1.2. The Logic of Verstehen Explanations

In abandoning the two-worlds assumptions implicit in most social scientists' conception of verstehen explanation, we saw that there arises an alternative account of this type of explanation which seemed, on the one hand, to avoid the philosophical errors inherent in the earlier version, and which, on the other, seemed compatible with the purely external viewpoint deemed by the social scientists a necessary condition which any explanation had to satisfy in order to be accepted as legitimately scientific. Motives,

* It is no accident that Vico, Hegel, Dilthey, and Weber were historians, and that it was in their reflections on what is involved in the understanding of historical personages acting on the 'stage of history' that led to their remarks on verstehen. It is also no accident that the main arguments about verstehen explanation in contemporary thought are to be found in the Philosophy of History. For it is in elucidating the meaning of human action that one is almost inexorably to a discussion of verstehen.

desires, intentions and needs could now be thought of as dispositions to act, and verstehen explanations were transformed into dispositional accounts of a person's behaviour.

However, I want to argue that this new view of verstehen explanation does not provide an accurate picture of it, that it is deficient both in its account of how verstehen explanations actually explain, and in particular in what it takes to be the key feature of all verstehen explanations. My intention in this is to eliminate a candidate which is a rival to the account I shall offer of verstehen, a rival which is particularly strong because it avoids the same philosophical doctrines I wish to avoid, and yet which, at the same time, provides an account which assumes that explanations of human action can be value-free.* As a result of this criticism of the Disposition Theory, I also hope to be in a better position to offer an alternative, and I hope more adequate, view of this form of explanation.

In the first place, to translate verstehen explanations into statements about a person's dispositions, or the dispositions of a group to which he belongs, seems to sap them of their explanatory power; for dispositions offer at best a vacuous kind of explanation. Secondly, as I shall demonstrate in a moment, dispositional explanations require for support other kinds of explanation which can only be termed verstehen explanations! This ironic situation gives lie to any theory which attempts to equate verstehen explanations with dispositions, and it is this which constitutes the main thrust of my argument against the Disposition Theory. First, however, I must demonstrate that dispositional accounts cannot, of them-

* Although I do not wish to depend on the arguments of the previous chapter, it should be noted that the terms employed in a dispositional account, in so far as they are action and group concepts, are subject to the same sort of analysis as I undertook in chapter 5. In other words, even if I am wrong, and verstehen explanations are indeed dispositional explanations, these explanations cannot be value free in so far as they use action and group concepts.

selves, explain an action, and that they consequently force the social scientist to ask further questions.

To render verstehen explanations into observation statements which link the witnessed behaviours of an individual or a group of individuals is to offer an explanation of this behaviour in terms of the habitual or usual way of behaving.¹ But such an 'explanation' does not seem to be much of an explanation at all, but rather nothing more than a generalized description; or, perhaps more fairly, it seems to be a 'half-way house explanation': for it does not seem at all satisfactory to explain a given act by exclaiming, "oh, it usually occurs in these situations!" In the first place, when such an answer is given we still most probably will want to know why it usually occurs (and it is well to remember here that it is precisely the job of the social scientist to explain generalized patterns of behaviour). In the second place, and far more important, is the fact that, even if one is satisfied by the generalized description and does not demand a further explanation for it, one still has not provided a good explanation of why the given act occurred on this particular occasion, for what is generally the case can not adequately explain any particular event which is an instance of this generalization.

Perhaps a concrete example will illuminate this argument. Let us say that we wish to explain why John voted Labour by offering one of two dispositional answers: either (a) 'John generally votes Labour and has done so since 1924'; or (b) 'John is a member of the working class, and 80% of the working class in England vote Labour.' I want to examine each case

1. "The performance of an action from a motive is different from its performance out of habit, but the sorts of things which belong to one class also belong to the other. Now to say that an action was done from force of habit is patently to say that a specific disposition explains the action ... To ask whether an action was done from force of habit or from kindness of heart is therefore to ask which of two specified dispositions is the explanation of an action." Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind, pg.89.

separately.

In the case of (a), the social scientist would most probably not rest content with this explanation, feeling that he had not adequately understood John until he knew the reason for this tendency. Dispositional explanations lead beyond themselves almost automatically, and this is so because they are so relatively uninformative. But an even more detrimental consideration regarding this explanation is that it does not tell us why John continued to vote in this election as he has done in the past, i.e. it does not tell us why he voted as he did in this particular case. The generalization may be a reason for us to expect that he will vote Labour, but it cannot explain why he did so in the present case - indeed, he could have voted Liberal and this still would have been consistent with the generalization. Social scientists, as indeed all students of human behaviour, know that in relatively similar situations a man may act differently than he has in the past, or that he may act in the same manner for different reasons; how one generally acts is not a good explanation for why one acted in a specific way in any particular situation, for even if one conforms to expectations we still will want to know why one acted in this way.

In the case of (b) the situation is the same. In the first place, the fact that 80% of the working class votes Labour does not explain why John votes Labour, for statistical generalizations do not explain individual occurrences which fall under them. One may have been deceived into thinking that he had explained John's act in this example, but this is because he would have confused the separate and fundamentally different concepts of what it is reasonable to expect with what has been explained. The grounds upon which it was more reasonable for an observer to expect that John would vote Labour cannot function as an explanation of why John did vote Labour - indeed, he might have voted Liberal even though there was an .8 probability that he would not. With respect to explanation, but

not expectation, a .8 probability is no different than a .1 probability, for in either case one still must explain why a particular instance either conformed to, or deviated from, one's expectations. As everyone knows, a man may act in a given situation quite differently from men of the same emotional disposition, habits, or social class, or he may act in the same manner for reasons dramatically different from them; how men of a certain type generally behave is not an explanation of why an individual did or did not behave in the manner expected.*

Again, the social scientist, perceiving that his job is to explain habitual behaviour, most probably would not rest content with such an explanation, but would inquire further into these regular patterns of class behaviour. As above, dispositional explanation is only a starting point for the explanation of an event.

In each of these ways dispositional accounts seem inadequate as explanations; indeed, they seem to point forward, demanding other explanations for support. It is at this juncture that the strange situation arises in which these dispositional explanations often prompt us to give what can only be termed verstehen explanations as the proper and full explanation both for the specific act under examination and the disposition that was supposed to explain it. And these verstehen explanations may make no mention of dispositions! Here we have the case in which, instead of verstehen explanations being nothing more than reports of dispositions, dispositions themselves are explained by verstehen explanations.

Thus, in our example, the demand for an explanation of why John has

* I am not denying that statistical generalizations can explain; I am only denying that they can explain a particular event falling under them. They do explain mass-events. (e.g. that 8,000,000 members of the working class voted Labour may be explained by the fact that there are 10,000,000 voting members of this class together with the statistical law that .8 of the working class traditionally vote Labour).

generally voted Labour since 1924 might be met by listing the various arguments he has adduced over the years as reasons for his belief that the Labour party acts more in his interest (and, of course, he may have different arguments for each of the elections in which he has voted). Again, the demand for an explanation why 80% of the working class votes Labour might be met by showing how it appeals to the interests of this class, and how it has appealed to different interests in different elections. Both of these would only be partial answers, of course; but already it is clear that the observed regularities are being explained by providing the reasons why John and his fellow workers might act in the manner they have acted given their situation over the years. And it is precisely the same case with respect to the demand for an explanation of why John voted Labour in this particular election; for here again it is the reason why he chose to vote as he did which is what we are seeking. Verstehen explanations, rather than being reports of dispositions, seem instead to provide us with a different kind of information altogether, a kind of information which we employ to explain dispositions as well as specific acts.

A witness observes that John brakes his automobile when a certain light turns red. He may offer, as an explanation of this particular act, the fact that John has been observed to stop .99 of the instances in which he has been confronted by a red light of a certain type. But this explanation will certainly not satisfy a social scientist worthy of the name, and this for two reasons. In the first place, he will undoubtedly want to know the reason for this observed regularity, and he will thus pursue the matter by demanding a further explanation. In the second place, this generalization could not suffice as an explanation of the particular event of John's stopping, for the fact that he usually stops does not explain why he stopped in this instance, and indeed is quite compatible with his failure to do so. Here again the scientist would pursue the matter

further, attempting to discover the reason why John stopped in this instance. Now both requests for further explanations may be answered by citing certain tendencies; but the important point is that they will be tendencies of a certain sort, namely, tendencies which express a direction toward a stated end ('he tends to avoid crossing corners when traffic is flowing perpendicular to him in order to avoid being in an accident'), or tendencies to conform to rules which the act is intended to follow ('he tends to obey the traffic laws of the city because he believes in obeying laws'). By simply citing an empirical generalization as an explanation, one misses the important character of actions such as stopping at traffic lights and obeying laws, a characteristic which is implicit in the very act of describing a piece of behaviour by means of an action concept, namely, that they are done for a reason.

Similarly, one may observe that automobile drivers usually stop at red lights; by this fact by itself cannot explain why any particular automobile driver stopped at a particular light. Moreover, we may well wish to inquire why automobile drivers' behaviour follows this general pattern, and as an answer we most probably will not offer another dispositional statement which just reports on observed behaviour; instead, we will refer to the rules of the society, and the beliefs that members of this society have as to what is the proper course of action when confronted by red lights at street corners. In this case, the disposition itself is explained by rules which act as the reason for it, an explanation which necessitates more than a mere reporting of observed events.

It is from considerations such as these which lead to the conclusion that there is something fundamentally wrong with the translation of a verstehen explanation into a disposition which can be unpacked into a series of observation statements describing how an agent acted and reacted in specified circumstances, and which explain a given act by relating it

to the agent's general tendencies or those of a group to which he belongs. Indeed, from the comments I have made as to how the explanatory power of dispositional statements must be supported, it ought to be apparent that the Dispositional Theory misses the primary point of verstehen explanations. For verstehen explanations explain, not by fitting a piece of observed behaviour into a series of similar pieces of observed actions, but by informing us of the reason why a person acted as he did, and by this is meant disclosing to us the point of the act. Dispositional accounts do not tell us what we want to know about actions because they cannot themselves indicate what the agent was up to, and, as I have already shown, it is precisely this feature of a situation which is significant when we describe it by means of an action concept. Dispositional accounts explain by demonstrating that what happened was not surprising in view of what has previously occurred in this agent's life; but what has happened in the past may completely fail to tell us why a person acts as he does, for the reason why he acts has to do with his beliefs and his aspirations, with his understanding of his situation together with his aims and goals, with his perception of the external circumstances in which he finds himself and the needs and wants he wishes to satisfy - considerations neglected in the dispositional account. Human actions are purposeful (in the broadest sense of that term), and the fundamental mistake in the Dispositional Theory is that it ignores the fact that an explanation of such an act informs us of these purposes.

Thus, while dispositions certainly can explain, at least at a very superficial level, and while they certainly figure as elements in a verstehen explanation, of themselves they do not provide an adequate understanding of the logic of verstehen explanations; for the essence of such explanations is that they apprehend an act or a series of acts or a tendency to act as being directed toward some end. Verstehen explanations are teleological in nature. It is therefore necessary to abandon the

Disposition Theory and to replace it by another which takes into account this fundamental quality of purposiveness. I must now offer another account of the logic of verstehen explanations which, while avoiding the philosophical errors of Dualism, is more in agreement with what we actually do in explaining a person's behaviour in terms of his intentions, motives, desires, purposes, and needs.

How do verstehen explanations function, in what way do they explain a person's actions? When, for example, someone inquires 'Why did Bill give John that money?', and we reply, 'Because John is a judge and Bill hoped that the money would influence the outcome of his forthcoming trial', how exactly does our response answer the question? It is an answer to the question precisely because it demonstrates how the act (of giving the money) furthered the agent's purposes (his desire to avoid being found guilty of a crime); we can now appreciate why Bill did what he did because we see it as part of the 'strategy' he employs in going about getting what he wants. In general, verstehen explanations make sense of an observed act by demonstrating that the act was an appropriate bit of behaviour in its context, and by appropriate is meant that we can grasp how it fits with the kind of person the agent is, with what he wants and how he thought he was going to achieve what he wanted. Verstehen explanations provide the key which helps us to discover the connections that exist between an agent's beliefs, his principles of action, his wants, and his deeds; they explain the meaning of an act by setting it into a coherent pattern which unites apparently unrelated or problematic acts into an intelligible whole by showing how they foster the agent's ends. The central core of a verstehen explanation is not that it places a single act into a pattern of previously observed acts, but that it allows us to see the act as a reasonable one for the agent to have done in his circumstances.* Thus, to say that the motive

* For this reason, verstehen explanations have been given the name of 'Rational Explanation'; this is most unfortunate, because the use of

behind John's marriage to Jane was ambition is not to explain John's act simply by relating it to his past actions which can be seen as forming a

the term 'rational' implies that all sorts of characteristics are requirements of, and elements in, verstehen explanations which, as a matter of fact, are neither necessary nor even implied. Needless confusion and debate has been the result. (For a good example of this, cf. Carl G. Hempel, "Rational Action", in Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, XXXV, 1961). Verstehen explanations offer reasons for acting; but it is a mistake to adopt an unnecessarily narrow view of reasoning, limiting it to the conscious contemplation of means and ends according to abstract criteria and concepts. Reasoning here is a practical concept, and has to do with the relatively intelligent, relatively coherent responses we make to the problems we face in the process of living in a world in which we are forced to work and in which we must deal with other creatures like ourselves.

It is true that the standard paradigm for purposeful action is the case in which the agent, actively pursuing an end chosen after deliberation, performs an act he has calculated will achieve this end most efficiently, at least according to his knowledge of the situation. But this does not mean that all verstehen explanations assume that all actions are undertaken in this manner; indeed, most actions and most verstehen explanations are of a kind which, though not incompatible with the paradigm, are radically different from it. It is appropriate here to mention five disclaimers with respect to verstehen explanation:

(1) The reason does not have to have been present in the agent's mind prior to the act: for in providing a verstehen explanation we are not reconstructing the calculations the agent in fact did make before acting; instead, we are suggesting the deliberation he might have made if he had deliberated before acting.

(2) The reason does not have to have been fully conscious: Verstehen explanations merely assert that the reason resembles that which a conscious man might have offered in that situation, or that his behaviour indicates that he finds the proposed end desirable. An agent may act without 'consciously' knowing why he acts in that way; he may even be deceived in this regard. To discover why he has acted is to apprehend the purposeful pattern which his behaviour seems to follow, a pattern which he might only become aware of after we have given the explanation.

(3) The reason does not have to be fully articulated: verstehen explanations claim only that the agent acted as though he took the specified set of propositions which comprises our explanation as true.

(4) The reason does not have to be specific: the reason may be a tendency to act, a standing disposition - but a disposition which expresses a direction toward some end. The explanation draws the connection between the desired end and the observed behaviour, and this by showing that the observed behaviour makes sense only if we understand the agent as pursuing the named end.

(5) This method does not assume that the agent is 'rational', except in so far as rational means 'able to form intentions (however unreasonable or ill-conceived) and carry them out (however inefficiently or clumsily)'. In other words, the only assumption is that the agent is an actor whose behaviour can be described in terms of action concepts, i.e. that he behaves purposefully. In giving an explanation we make his behaviour intelligible; but this does not imply that it was the

general disposition to do those things, even manipulating friends and relations, which foster his standing in the world. For John may hardly ever have exhibited such a trait in his activities before, and yet we still may accept the explanation precisely because it makes sense of a puzzling move (puzzling, perhaps, because he had professed a dislike of Jane before the marriage) - his inexplicable act is suddenly clarified when we remember his secret desire for wealth and power, and combine it with the fact that Jane is the President's daughter. Motive explanations interpret an observed action as a move in the attempt to achieve some goal, however nebulous. Moreover, even if John has exhibited grasping and exploitive behaviour consistently throughout his life, this character trait of ambitiousness functions as a motive only because it categorizes his behaviour as being related to aims which this behaviour serves. A disposition can be a motive, i.e. can be offered as an explanation, only in so far as it is a disposition which is directed toward the achieving of some end. Motives are one kind of the general type of explanation which explains by demonstrating the agent's reason for acting in the way he did.

In this and other cases of human action, we explain a person's behaviour by bringing some order to the welter of actions he performs by viewing them as part of a certain strategy; we search for an explanation by attempting to discover what could have been the agent's reasons for having done what he did, and when an interpretation of this sort seems to account for the observed actions we declare that the act is now intelligible. Saying

correct thing to do, the most efficient, the cheapest, or that it optimally maximized some value. We can appreciate connections between acts, understand their point, grasp the thread of purpose which links apparently disparate factors and events, we can do all of these things even though we feel that the agent in performing such acts for such reasons is acting in a cruel, odd, inappropriate or self-defeating manner, or that they betray a mis-calculation on his part as to either his own needs and wants or as to his beliefs regarding the situation in which he finds himself.

that an act is intelligible is saying that we now appreciate what the act means by grasping how it aids in the satisfaction of the goals and desires of the agent. By offering a verstehen explanation we call attention, not to some invisible mental occurrence, nor simply to what an agent did do in analogous circumstances in the past, but rather to the purposeful character of the proceedings; in this way, these explanations permit us to see how the agent's behaviour is sensible, for it then can be understood as governed by considerations we ourselves can appreciate, and therefore which satisfy our curiosity. Verstehen explanations provide the rationale behind the action, and their logical form consists, not in stating regularities, but in making clear the agent's reasons for doing what he did.

6.1.3. Verstehen Explanations as Moral Explanations

In order to discover the reasons why a person has acted as he has, we ask some such questions as, what was he meaning to do? or, what was he trying to accomplish? or, what goal was served thereby? In framing our questions in this way, we clearly indicate that we presume that there is some justification for the act which bewilders us, and that this justification is its purpose which will disclose to us the rationale behind such a manoeuvre. But putting our questions in this way also reveals the manner in which we must proceed if we are to uncover the reasons for a person's act; for it means that we must examine various motives which might demonstrate how the act was an appropriate one to have performed, and we decide which one to accept by seeing which one makes the best sense for the actor in terms of his situation, his beliefs, and his principles of action. In other words, reasons are explanations because they provide a key which permits us to see the act as appropriate, and we decide how the act was appropriate by evaluating it in light of what we know about the actor and the circumstances surrounding the act.

Verstehen explanations express our appraisal of the acts we are trying to explain, our judgements as to how they make sense. Now all appraisals involve criteria, and this case is no different; but what is peculiar and important here is the nature of these criteria. For when we assert that an act is comprehensible when one sees it as done for a specific motive, we are implying the judgement that the actor can be understood as sensible only if he acted in the circumstances for this motive, that only this purpose makes his actions reasonable. In observing an actor, we want to know what it was that made the course of action eligible in his eyes, and by providing a verstehen explanation we recognize as a reason for this action something which is relevant to the promotion of some interest of his. But what is and what is not 'sensible' and 'reasonable', and what can count as enhancing the 'eligibility' of something, is at least partially a matter of opinion, of individual appreciation and insight into the way in which human beings act.* What we offer as a reason for a person's behaviour, and what reason-explanations we are prepared to accept, depends ultimately on our personal view of what is appropriate human behaviour, of what is normal and reasonable, and thus what can serve as a justification for behaving in a particular way.

For example, one might wish to explain Andrew Carnegie's action toward the end of his life of giving away to charity millions of dollars from his private fortune. Attempting to uncover the rationale behind this act means that one must evaluate it in order to discover in what way it can be viewed as an appropriate thing for Carnegie to have done. However, what constitutes appropriate behaviour depends to a large extent on what one thinks are the

* I do not say that it is merely a matter of personal opinion, as I shall show momentarily. There is evidence appropriate to arguments about motives, needs and intentions; this includes the beliefs of the actor, the norms and values of his social circle, the ways he has behaved in the past, the manner in which other members of his society generally behave, etc.

motives and intentions which shape and give direction to men's lives, and ultimately on the needs and wants which underlie these motives and intentions. Thus, someone might well be satisfied with the explanation which Carnegie himself might have given, namely, that he was genuinely moved by the plight of most men and he wished to ease their burdens; others might be suspicious of this, feeling that men just don't act for these motives, and certainly not men who have amassed fortunes in their lifetime: they prefer the explanation that Carnegie acted out of economic self-interest, both by earning tax credits and by forstalling the power of the unions; still others might offer the explanation that he really acted to relieve guilt feelings for having mistreated his mother in early life which he generalized to include all men; others might explain the act as a means of insuring Salvation in Heaven by doing good deeds; others might conclude that it was an attempt by an aging man to overcome his approaching death by creating a permanent charitable foundation through which his name would live on; others might interpret the act as an attempt to inject some transcendent meaning into an otherwise crass and rather shabby life. This list of somewhat contradictory reasons could be expanded indefinitely, but the point ought to be established. All of these quite plausible explanations ultimately express the judgement of the observer, judgements which in part reflect his moral viewpoint toward humankind. Which verstehen explanation we are prepared to accept to some extent depends on our view of the human condition.

It might be objected here* that it is precisely the function of the social sciences to formulate empirically testable laws which correlate how people act in certain situations with the motives why they do so, and to which an observer may appeal in trying to explain a particular act. In

* cf., e.g. E. Nagel The Structure of Science, pgs.552-557.

this way, the social sciences will gradually remove the idiosyncratic element in verstehen explanations and replace it with the objective and impersonal laws of science. But unfortunately this proposed purification of verstehen explanations cannot occur, and we can see why in at least two separate instances.

In the first place, this suggestion is based on precisely the misunderstanding of verstehen explanation which I have been at pains to point out in this section of the thesis. For reasons are not separate events which cause observed actions, such that when one observed that every time there was an act of a certain sort he could independently check to see if the reason was present as a causal element, thereby building up statistical generalizations between reasons on the one hand and actions on the other. A reason has no separate existence apart from the particular act which it illuminates; for, as we have seen, reasons are the 'ends-in-view' which the observer ascertains to be the goals of the behaviour he witnesses, they are the pattern of purpose which he extracts from the flow of actions. The elements cited in a verstehen explanation are logically inseparable from the acts they explain because they are the sense of direction which these acts exhibit to the theorist; reasons are the character of the individual act, the shape and contour of the proceedings, and as such they have no meaning apart from the acts which they interpret. Thus, whether an act was an instance of acting out of greed, or the need for meaning, or sympathy, or economic self-interest cannot be decided without some reference to what satisfies the individual theorist's sense of the purposes men have for living and acting, and that depends on the individual theorist. There is no possibility of identifying instances of behaving in a certain way for a specific reason independent of the individual theorist's opinions as to what is an instance of behaving for this reason, precisely because reasons, far from being events which other theorists might observe and testify were indeed present, are nothing more than the explanations which satisfy this theorist. Proposals

which call for generalized correlations between specific reasons and specific acts which do not contain the scientist's personal view are incoherent because they fail to recognize that reasons just are the purposes which the scientist understands an act was intended to achieve.

In the second place, what people generally do is not the sort of information that is ultimately needed in order to decide what a person's reasons are. For in interpreting the meaning of an act, there can be no question of deducing the agent's reasons from information of what other people have done in similar circumstances, or even of what he has done in the past. All verstehen explanations, in trying to make a specific act intelligible, are necessarily contextual in nature, rooted in the specific circumstances of the particular act. The point of an act is embedded in the concrete relationship between the agent's beliefs, his needs and goals, the act he performed, and the circumstances in which he was placed, for, as we have seen, the assigning of meaning or sense to an act is simply seeing how these factors are peculiarly interrelated in a coherent manner. Apart from these, the verstehen explanation literally has no meaning. Verstehen explanations judge the relevance of certain factors which might have induced the agent to do what he did; they are not simple reports of what he or others have done.

This is not to claim that statistics of what an agent has done in the past, and how other agents in analogous situations have acted, are totally irrelevant in deciding a man's reasons for acting. All I have argued is that this sort of information is not the fundamental ingredient upon which the matter of why a person acted is finally decided - a position implied by those who wish either to buttress a particular verstehen explanation by general laws (Weber), or who believe that it is the correctness and objectivity of general laws which will remove the arbitrary element from verstehen explanations (Nagel). For the issue at stake in these explanations

is not what is generally done, but what was the appropriate thing to have done. And even though information concerning what is generally done must influence any observer's views as to the reasons why people act, such views depend on more than this kind of information. What was the appropriate thing to have done, and therefore what reason one offers as the explanation of an act, is not a scientific proposition based solely on empirical generalization; it is a moral conclusion about the sense of the act.

In all of this one could do worse than to interpret a verstehen explanation as akin to an aesthetic interpretation of a work of art. Attempting to understand why tribesmen dance for rain, why immigrants leave their homeland, why men vote as they do, why they play games social and physical, why they make war, give gifts, exploit one another, and all the other actions which comprise social life, is quite similar to trying to understand mankind's artistic acts. In both cases one must attempt to see how various features are interrelated to form a coherent pattern; one must discover the specific conventions and rules at work in the particular cultures; and one must have an appreciation of how each fits into and furthers a certain style of life, a certain coherent set of aspirations, values, beliefs and needs, and the techniques employed to achieve them. There is no general 'objective' law here which we must discover in order to adequately explain men's social or aesthetic actions, and which anyone could consult in order to understand them; for unlike scientific procedures, such interpretation is not a matter of technique: it is the result of experience of human character and practical wisdom.

This is not to say that it is impossible to have an argument about a poem or a social act's meaning, because all interpretation of this sort is the mere expression of subjective preference. There are good interpretations resting on sound, well argued cases, and there are bad interpretations resting on insensitive, incoherent or unfair arguments. Indeed, in these

arguments, empirical evidence such as what a poet or an actor has done before, the influences on his work or life, the men he wishes to emulate and those whose example he hopes to avoid, what other members of his social or aesthetic tradition have done, as well as internal evidence regarding the poem or the act itself, all these are relevant to arguments about meaning. But the point is that these arguments cannot be settled to the satisfaction of all the contending parties by such empirical evidence alone. One doesn't prove his interpretation of either a work of art or a social act; one suggests it to others, appealing to the patterns of activity which describe one's own and his society's experience and interpretation of the world, and in terms of which he judges the intelligibility of the actions of others which he encounters.

I have argued that, although they are not the only explanation which one can give of an event, and although they might not be sufficient of themselves to explain it, verstehen explanations are a necessary part of any explanation of a human act. Without verstehen explanations, there is no social action. And it is for this reason that an understanding of the logic of verstehen explanation is an essential ingredient in any account of the social sciences: without them, the social sciences would not be social sciences. Unfortunately for those who wish to construct a value-free, scientific account of human social action, one which will serve as the neutral and impartial basis for the reconstruction of society, this fact makes such a dream logically impossible. For verstehen explanations explain an act or a series of acts only by demonstrating how they were the appropriate thing to have done; but what one will accept as the reason by which the act can then be seen to have been appropriate depends on what one thinks is reasonable, and that depends on criteria which it is up to the individual to endorse. Social scientists, especially because they attempt to construct broad hypotheses to explain large classes of action,

often propose conflicting and sometimes contradictory reasons which lead people to act as they do, and this is what one would expect in light of what I have been arguing in this section. What is wrong to expect is that there will emerge out of this confusion a Newton who will be able to convince other scientists on scientific, impersonal grounds to adopt a single, all-embracing verstehen theory of human action, or even a middle level theory which explains a host of seemingly unrelated actions by uniting into a coherent pattern the diverse motives which others have proposed as explanations for individual acts. For in order for such an account to be coherent, it would have to eliminate those purposes, desires, goals, intentions and needs which are contradictory to one another, and furthermore it would have to arrange the remainder into some sort of priority, and both of these steps involve making the same kind of choice which any simple verstehen account involves. In all cases, as I have tried to show, the personality of the scientist and his assumptions regarding the social world in which he lives must enter into his account of people's reasons for doing things. One thinks of Freud in this respect.

Verstehen explanations are a form of moral explanation because their validity depends upon the opinions and suppositions which the scientist holds regarding his fellow man. One should not expect any more uniformity in verstehen explanations than one finds in moral judgements about a certain state of affairs, or in aesthetic interpretations of a poem or a painting; all three are of the same order.* And just as there can be no policy science formulating political courses of action on the basis of aesthetics or ethics, so also there cannot be a policy science based on a discipline which employs verstehen explanations in its theories.

* It is conceivable, of course, that there could be agreement because of the uniformity of opinion which is becoming an increasingly dominant feature of mass society; but this tragic possibility is obviously an entirely different matter.

6.2. Causal Explanation

6.2.1. Causes and Action

From what I have been arguing about verstehen explanations of social action, one might conclude that according to my account empirical generalizations have no role to play in social science. But such a conclusion would be mistaken, and the reason for this may be seen in at least two ways. In the first place, if actions follow certain rules and intentional patterns as I have argued, then one would expect that there would be regularities in these actions: indeed, without them social life as I have been describing it would be inconceivable. It is thus that the discovery and correlation of regularities in social action has a crucial role to play even in the providing of verstehen explanations themselves: for their presence might well help the social scientist to construct such an explanation or indicate that one was needed, and their absence would probably mean that a particular verstehen explanation was wrong.*

But there is a second instance of the relevance of empirical generalizations to social science which is of far greater importance; this is the case in which the social scientist systematically investigates the conditions under which people act. The social scientist will inquire into the origin and surrounding circumstances of a certain action or class of actions, the economic, social, material, technological, demographic, etc. background and pre-conditions of a certain institution, convention, or type of practice; and he will seek to know not only the purpose of a social act, but how many people perform it, how often, in relation to what situations, and by what methods. This aspect of social science is much more in keeping with traditional conceptions of its nature, because here the observer views the objects of his study from an external viewpoint, attempting to arrive at

* None of this is incompatible with my earlier assertion that what is generally done is not the ultimate determinant of which verstehen to give.

information of which the actors themselves are probably not aware.

Thus it is that the observed regularities of actions, and particularly general correlations between independently identified circumstances and subsequent acts, are of prime importance in the scientific study of societies. The question that must be asked is, however, are these observed regularities causal explanations? I would like to claim here that indeed they are, but that when dealing with human action the concept of cause has a different, though related, meaning from what it has in the natural sciences. In this section (6.2.1) I will argue that a cause of a human action is not a set of variables which is, other conditions presumed unchanged, a sufficient condition for a change in another set of variables (the effect)*; instead, a cause should be defined as a condition which functions as a warrant for an agent to perform in one way rather than another. Furthermore, and as a result of this change in the meaning of the concept cause, I intend to demonstrate that there can be no causal laws in social science of the form, if x, then y (where y is an action), but that causal laws are rather generalizations built up out of particular instances which inform us of what people do in specific situations and what they might reasonably be expected to do in certain circumstances.**

* There is another meaning of the concept cause which I will take up in section 6.2.2. namely, the 'final' or 'crucial' necessary condition which, with other conditions, comprise a sufficient condition for a specific change in the object or process which is taken to be the effect.

** I do not wish to base my arguments against a value-free conception of causality in the social sciences on what I have already argued regarding the descriptions of social action and groups in chapter 5. However, it is worthwhile noting that there is a very strong argument that is appropriate here and which is rooted in the analysis of that chapter. For causal regularity or uniformity means at least the constant recurrence of the same kind of event on the same kind of occasion; such empirical laws presuppose, therefore, judgements of identity, i.e. presuppose that events or processes described by the same concepts are in fact identical to one another. Now this presents no major difficulty in the natural sciences, because what is to count as a specific event in those studies is determined by a scientific convention which is itself based

In section 6.1.1 I argued that a set of conditions x could not be a sufficient condition for the occurrence of an action, and that this was the case for a logical reason: for such a causal explanation asserts that, given a certain set of antecedent conditions, a certain action must invariably follow, and I maintained that if a certain piece of behaviour must invariably occur in the presence of a specific set of circumstances it could not be an action. When we describe a man as doing an act x , we thereby are asserting that he might be doing otherwise in that situation, that his response is not merely automatic, that he could cease what he is doing, or change course, or re-consider, or modify his behaviour if he wanted to, if he saw that it was not conducive to his purposes, interests, needs or

on the measurement and observation of physical objects or events. In general, therefore, there can be interpersonal agreement that events are similar in all relevant respects because such assertions can be empirically verified; it is this which gives science its objectivity, its impersonality towards the objects it studies.

But as I argued in chapter 5, the case is radically different in the social sciences (at least in so far as they employ action and group concepts); for here what is to count as a 'similar' event can only be determined in terms of the rules of the particular society which govern that sort of activity, and/or the intentions of the individual actors. In other words, in the social sciences it is the rules and purposes governing the action under study which ultimately determine its identity. But, as I have argued, to determine an act's identity in this manner is both subjective (because it involves a judicial decision that the physical movements in those circumstances are indeed a certain act), as well as implying a moral stance towards the person(s) being observed (because to describe behaviour by means of a conventional action concept is to implicitly judge that prima facie certain other actions ought to be performed, and to tacitly supply a test by which this behaviour can be assessed; and to describe behaviour by means of an intentional action concept is to mark out the behaviour for which an agent can be praised or blamed, and also to create standards by which to evaluate the act). As such, it is a value-laden description. It is for this reason that judgements of identity cannot be made on the basis of mere observation, and that the relationship of the social scientist to his object of study is not that of a natural scientist to his, i.e. observer to observed; and because this is the case, the empirical laws stating regularities between a certain circumstance and a certain sort of action or between two sorts of action must also be logically different in the two cases. In fact, just as it is true that the description of a single act is value-laden in the sense I have given to that term, so these laws must be value-laden as well.

wants, that it was antithetical to his values, or that its outcomes were contrary to his expectations. Logically implied in the perception of a piece of behaviour as done for a reason is the belief that there are alternative courses open to the agent such that he might not be performing the act he is performing. It is just this feature of human behaviour - the possibility of alternatives - which we mark out when we describe it by means of action concepts, and which we would be denying if we also said that it was caused and meant by this that, given certain conditions, this behaviour must follow invariably.

The reason why this sufficient-condition interpretation of causality is incompatible with the logic of action concepts can easily be understood by further reflecting on what these concepts imply. For if acting means 'behaving for a reason', then acting means 'behaving in terms of one's beliefs about his situation and his intentions regarding it'; this, in turn, means that with regard to actions one must include into their 'initial conditions' the beliefs and feelings of the social actors about these initial conditions. Thus it is that no set of external conditions of itself can account for an act, unless one were to postulate what is certainly and demonstrably false, namely, that the beliefs and feelings of all actors in such and such a situation are identical or can be predicted in terms of universal laws.* Moreover, if this were the case, and men invariably

* One is reminded of the so-called propositional laws of behavioural psychology, especially those from Learning Theory. The most basic one is, "When a response is followed by a reward, the probability of its recurrence increases." As a 'law' of human learning this is most certainly false: one is reminded of A.S. Neill's technique which he uses at Summerhill of rewarding apprehended thieves with the result that the stealing usually ceases; and all of us have experienced cases in which, precisely because we have rewarded a child, the behaviour we wish to re-inforce stops (so-called 'difficult' or 'independent' children); again, is the law true for sado-masochists (don't we describe people in this way precisely because this law does not work with them?). Of course, it may be responded that in these cases what appeared to be rewards in fact were not, and so they do not invalidate the law; but in

responded to a set of conditions in a specific way, one could still not say that this set of conditions was a sufficient condition for the occurrence of this response and still describe this response by means of an action concept: for this would be denying the possibility of re-appraisal on the part of the performers, and this possibility is required if a piece of behaviour is to be seen as an act. Without the notion of re-appraisal, and a whole host of notions related to it such as re-formulation, re-examination, 'learning from one's mistakes', 'modifying one's tactics', 'trying another ploy', acting simply to upset the general expectations of others, including social scientists (i.e. 'being uncooperative', 'trying to be different or special'), rethinking, etc., the concept of action would have no meaning at all. Because of these considerations, it is logically impossible to predict with certainty what a certain actor as an actor will do, and it is therefore logically impossible for there to be invariable laws about the behaviour of an actor or a group of actors: for in the total situation within which men act, the 'same' initial conditions will not always

this case the law simply becomes a tautology in which a reward is defined as something which elicits the recurrence of a response. (For a discussion of this which is riddled with errors of this kind, cf. George Homans, The Nature of Social Science (New York, 1967), chapter 2, 'General Propositions'. He discusses the above 'general proposition'. He also uses it to explain conformitive behaviour, such behaviour supposedly being the result of 'rewards' and 'punishments' by the social group as a whole; in this discussion he admiringly cites a 'general law' from Malinowski: "'Whenever the native can evade his obligations without loss of prestige, or without the prospective loss of gain, he does so, exactly as a civilized businessman would do.'" This is so obviously false that it hardly needs comment (unless it is a truism): what about 'doing the right thing because its right, even if it costs me'? or guilt (as opposed to shame or punishment, i.e. it is internally imposed)? Lastly, he uses this same law from Learning Theory as the 'enthymemic' major premise of all verstehen explanations, thereby hoping to show what I have already denied, that verstehen explanations require general propositions in order to count as legitimate explanations; the form he uses is: "The greater the value of a reward to a person, the more likely he is to take action to get the reward." Again, this is only true sometimes and with some people (or it is a truism); not only is it not required for a verstehen explanation, but as it stands it cannot be used as the basis upon which to deduce the occurrence of a specific act.

be the same, nor will the 'same laws' be in operation.*

As an actor, a man is aware of his environment, he must assimilate its features, incorporate them into his schemes, relate them to his needs and wants, and he must then decide to act in one way rather than another: in each of these steps there is room for variation such that 'objectively the same' conditions would result in different actions. In human action there are two 'variables' involved, the conditions of the environment and the actor himself; both affect each other, both actively participate. The environment doesn't push the actor as in the case of one billiard ball hitting another; in the case of action it is rather almost as if the struck billiard ball had to appreciate that it was hit and to decide that it wished to move. Actors are 'governed' by their interpretations of, and intentions toward, the external stimuli rather than by the external stimuli directly; accordingly, as these interpretations and intentions differ, universal laws about stimulus x being a sufficient condition for reaction y cannot be formulated and still be compatible with describing the reaction as an action.**

* It may seem that I am asserting that it is logically absurd for a man to be described as acting if he reacts to a given set of circumstances always in the same way; but I am not claiming that it is a logical impossibility for an agent to behave always in the same way in certain situations, and still be described as doing an action: I am saying that even if this were the case (and I can think of no such example) one could still not say that this set of circumstances is a sufficient condition for the occurrence of the piece of behaviour and still describe this behaviour as an action; for by identifying it as an action one is thereby implying that the agent could have done differently, that there is always the possibility that he won't act in the manner which, as a matter of fact, he does. Even if an agent, or group of agents, has in the past always responded to a set of conditions x with the same action y, this set of conditions (x), though the cause of this action (y) cannot be thought of as a sufficient condition for it, such that one could predict, if x, then act y will occur, for then one would be denying what is implied in adopting an action concept in the first place.

** This account explains three often noted features which are peculiar to causal laws in the human sciences, and which cannot be explained if one adopts a conception of cause identical to that employed in the natural sciences: the first of these is that causal laws in the social

It does not follow from this, however, that the social sciences do not seek the causes of social action; all that it means is that the notion of causality has a different meaning in the social sciences from what it has in the natural sciences, at least in so far as they are concerned to explain human actions. Thus, while it is manifestly true that the social scientist does want to discover the antecedents of a particular act or class of actions, it is not true that he is searching for an invariant connection between them; instead, he is investigating the range of available alternatives and conditions which confronted the agent in order to learn which of these led him to act in one way rather than another. The cause of an action is that set of features of the agent's environment which made it seem more reasonable for him to behave in the manner he did, and whose presence makes it more reasonable for us to have expected that he, and other agents similar to him, would perform in the observed manner. This new conception of causality accords with what social scientists do all the time: they attempt to view a certain sort of action as the response to a set of specific circumstances, assuming that these circumstances predisposed, as it were, the agent to act in the way he did and not in some other way.

Thus, for example, a social scientist might try to demonstrate that the cause of a race riot was a peculiar combination of physical circumstances (e.g., the heat); the upbringing of the participants (e.g., anti-authoritarian permissiveness); particular historical personages (a community leader) or events (the arrest of the community leader); the conventional habits, morals, and expectations of the community; intra-community communication

sciences are always statistical, i.e. they are never an invariable linking of circumstance with act; the second is that these statistical laws assert relations of dependence in a relatively unspecified fraction of the instances; and the third is that a failure on the part of the actor to respond in the appointed manner, even in a large percentage of the cases, does not necessarily invalidate the asserted causal law.

(e.g., television fanning the flames of discontent); the state of technology (requiring skills which the lower classes do not possess); the kinds of institutions (e.g., the relative unresponsiveness of the welfare system, relative rigidity and highhandedness of the police); the form of government (no participation of the minority in local affairs); living conditions (such as housing); a revolutionary ideology; the role of the churches (here perhaps the decline in the power of the churches); labour and status immobility; migration rates; etc. etc.¹ What is being asserted here is not that these circumstances invariably produce a riot, which is patently false, but that they make it more likely that there will be one: for in these circumstances rioting becomes a more 'attractive' form of expression, a more 'appropriate' act, more 'justified' and therefore more understandable.

Explaining causality in this way leads to an interesting conclusion; for obviously the sorts of circumstances that one picks out as crucial to the producing of an event or an act will ultimately depend on one's understanding of the reasons why people act as they do; in other words, causal explanations ultimately rest on verstehen explanations. For if a cause is a condition which provides a 'good opportunity' or a 'compelling motive' or a 'warrant' for acting in a specific way, then one must already have in mind what can be an 'opportunity', 'motive' or 'warrant' in order to distinguish the cause, and this, in turn, presupposes an understanding of the motives, intentions, perceptions, needs and desires of the agents whose behaviour one is trying to explain. Thus, for example, if one believes that due to the lack of discipline in the school a child will be led to denigrate authority, even if surreptitiously or unconsciously, and thus to explode against authority figures in certain circumstances, then he will

1. All of these causes appear in the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York, 1968), under the chairmanship of Otto Kerner.

see significance in the lack of discipline in the rioter's educational experience. If, on the other hand, one does not accept this account of motivation, then such a factor will play an unimportant, or even perhaps a reverse, role in one's causal explanations. In the case of human action, verstehen explanations are the primary form of explanation around which causal explanations move in 'orbit', i.e. as conditions which generally warrant one kind of behaviour rather than another.*

But, it may be objected here, what about the notion of a causal law in which the observer patiently builds up regularities between specified conditions and specified acts - it does not appear that verstehen explanations are required in order to discover and to formulate such statistical laws. But it is here that we come up against an often noted difficulty in the Humean conception of cause, namely, that to say that x causes y is to say more than that x is invariably followed by y, or followed in a precisely specified number of times: it is also to say that there is a reason or ground why the consequent always or usually follows the antecedent. If causality only meant statistically significant correlation, one could not allow for the possibility of coincidence, nor could he entertain the hypothesis that both x and y are caused by some other factor z but are not causally related themselves. Moreover, this is an extremely important point with respect to the notion of causality as providing explanations of an event; for in order for a causal law to function as an explanation, it must provide some account of the 'machinery' operative in the observed situation which relates cause to effect, and thus which accounts for the regularities that are observed. The goal of science is not simply to accumulate instances of events following other events, but to comprehend the linkages which are

* This is exactly the reverse of the relationship between causes and verstehen which Weber proposed.

operative between them. It is for both of these reasons that causal laws, to function as causal laws, require some grounding in some generally accepted theory of the subject matter, such that the regularities can be accounted for in terms of the system of explanations, causal linkages, and causal histories that comprise current knowledge.* A causal law not only is the record of uniformities between classes of events, but is a 'theory-impregnated' record, i.e. it offers us reasons for these regularities.

It is for this reason that verstehen explanations must be forthcoming even with respect to the generalizations about aggregate social behaviour if these generalizations are to qualify as causal laws. For here again the 'mechanism' through which the circumstances caused the acts in question are the needs, desires, motives, etc. of the actors. For example, one might discover, as have many observers since Quetelet, that the numbers of crime remain relatively constant over a period of time and in different circumstances (even though crime is presumably a matter of individual choice). This generalization, while important, is only the beginning of

* It has been argued (cf. William Dray, Laws and Explanation in History, chapter 4; D. Gasking, "Causation and Recipes", Mind, lxiv, 1955, p.479-487) that a causal connection would be asserted even if one did not possess a theory to explain it, if one found that by manipulating one event/object one was able to control another event/object. In the first place, it should be noted that such an account does proceed beyond the straightforward Humean account of invariable concomitance, and thus it is in agreement with what I am claiming here to this extent. Secondly, this account could function as an alternative to the 'theory-impregnated' account of causality which I offer only in the most common and simple situations. The manipulative account as an alternative rests on the assumption that the scientist has no insight into the 'mechanism' which links two apparently unrelated events, one of which he can control by manipulating the other; but precisely because this is the case, such causal instances would be more or less confined to concrete, practical and specific cases. These could not be the basis of a science which attempts to construct general causal laws linking widely disparate phenomena identified by abstract characteristics which common sense or everyday practice would seldom, if ever, bring together. And precisely because this manipulative account cannot offer explanations and thus cannot serve as the basis for a science of any sophistication, it is not particularly relevant here.

science, however. From it one is led to inquire into the reasons for this regularity; let us assume that one constructs a hypothesis to the effect that poverty causes crime, and that, because the number of poor remains relatively constant in a given period, the crime statistics can be explained by this hypothesis. This is a truly scientific undertaking, for here a causal law is being proposed to the effect that poverty is related in a statistically significant way to crime because poverty causes crime. But such a law can function as a causal explanation only because it accords with a certain interpretation of why people commit crimes, and thus in what circumstances one would expect crimes to be committed; such an interpretation is a verstehen explanation, however, for it offers a reason why crime would be more 'appropriate' or more 'warranted' in certain circumstances (here, poverty). It is thus that the social scientist passes from a generalization of observed behaviour to a causal law by means of a specific verstehen explanation. Given a different verstehen interpretation by a different social scientist, poverty might have little to do with crime and drop out as a causal law altogether (he might, for example, believe that poverty per se is not a reason to induce people to commit crimes, but that their relative deprivation is; and since this is a social, rather than an economic phenomenon, the causes of crime and the statistical regularity of crime figures, will be quite different).

Both of these analyses - one attempting to ascertain the meaning of the concept 'cause' with respect to human action, the other analyzing what is involved in formulating causal laws in the sciences concerned with social action - lead to the same point, namely, the dependence of causal explanations in the social sciences, at least in so far as they are attempting to explain social action, on verstehen explanations. Causes are circumstances which make it more 'reasonable' for a person or type of person or group of persons to act in one way rather than another, they 'provide a motive' to

agents; a cause is a 'warranting condition' and a causal law is a generalized warranting condition. But what is and what is not warranting depends on our understanding of the agent's perceptions, motives, intentions and needs, in short, on our understanding of the beliefs of people and the reasons and purposes that guide their lives.* Both the nature and the explanatory power of causality in the social sciences are limited and defined by the sort of verstehen explanation one gives or is prepared to consider precisely because these sciences are concerned with human action. But I have already demonstrated (in section 6.1.3) that verstehen explanations are a form of moral explanation; and thus it is that, in so far as this is correct, causal explanations of human action are also a derivative form of moral explanation, and are meaningless apart from such moral explanations.

In this section I have been trying to show that human action is always action-in-a-situation (both social and natural), and thus that a social scientist cannot explain actions in terms of psychological propensities alone; he must also discover the conditions upon which a certain type of action depends, the strength of their influence, the ways in which they alter the characteristics of the act, how often it is performed, by whom, in conjunction with what other acts and by what methods. In other words, a social scientist, through careful empirical investigation and a battery of procedures and techniques of measurement, must attempt to frame general causal explanations. In so far as he is successful at this, the scientist will provide information that is probably unknown to the actors themselves. Nevertheless, the social scientist ought to remember that these causal

* This accounts for the fact that causal laws in the social sciences are only generalizations built up from a number of particular causal diagnoses. For as we have seen, verstehen accounts are fundamentally particular because it literally makes no sense to separate them from their specific context. Thus, in so far as causal diagnoses rest on verstehen explanations, such diagnoses must be rooted in a particular situation.

conditions are conditions of an action, and that logically, therefore, they can be nothing more than circumstances which make a certain act more attractive or appropriate. The antecedent conditions can not be sufficient conditions for an act, they can not automatically elicit its performance, nor can they invariably do so, nor can they compel the agent to act in a certain manner; these antecedent conditions are rather the conditions in light of which human beings of certain sorts act in a certain way because it is reasonable for them to do so. Causal conditions thus act as justifications for, i.e. provide the grounds for, the adoption of a specific form of behaviour. But the use of such terms as 'appropriate', 'attractive', 'reasonable', and 'justificatory' immediately places the social scientist into the world of verstehen explanations; this is as it should be: for the causes of action only have relevance to the explanation of an action because they are logically dependent upon, and derivative from, the aims, beliefs and needs of the performers of this action. It is for this reason that causal accounts of human action cannot be the 'value-free' basis of a science of man: they rest on what I have already shown to be a form of moral explanation.

6.2.2. Causes and Conditions: the moral factor

From among the list of conditions which, though not sufficient to produce a type of action, are strong warrants for it, the social scientist will also wish to discover that set of conditions which appears to be the crucial factor in eliciting the action. In seeking the cause of an event, one is often not looking for the sufficient conditions to produce it, but rather is assuming some field and looking for the differentia which marks off within that field the cases in which the event occurs from those in which it does not, the differentia being an 'intrusion' into the field which is taken to be the cause of the event. For example, out of all the conditions which surround a fire, one will seek to differentiate, from

among those which are necessary for it to have broken out (that the barn was made of wood, that there was hay in it, that the keeper smoked in it, etc.), those which seem vital (that the lighted match was thrown upon the hay) from those which appear unimportant (that there was oxygen in the air). These remarks are intended to introduce a second definition of the concept 'cause';* for the cause of an event can also be that 'crucial' or 'final' condition out of all the necessary conditions particularly relevant in producing a specific event.**

However, as I shall show, to determine the cause, interpreted according to this second definition, involves essentially pragmatic criteria which reflect both the subjective perceptions of the individual social scientist as to what is normal and as to what is required for social life to continue relatively peacefully, as well as his subjective opinions concerning what direction the society he is observing ought to take. It is for this reason that discovering the cause in this sense cannot be a value-free undertaking, but is rather a form of moral explanation. To see why

* The first definition was that a cause is that set of factors which, ceteris paribus, is sufficient to produce a change in another factor, a definition which I have now amended to mean 'warranting conditions' when referring to human actions.

** To say that the social scientist wishes to discover the necessary conditions of an act is not to say that he selects as a cause a condition which is necessary for the event's ever occurring. As I have already shown, the cause of an act can only be determined contextually in a particular instance; and again, causal laws of action are only generalizations from observed particular cases, not laws of invariable connection. When a social scientist claims that without x, y could not have happened, he is not necessarily implying that only if there is an x can there be a y; rather, he means that in that particular situation, if everything else had remained the same and x was not present, the y which in fact occurred would not have done so. Thus, for example, the presence of some reward (say, high pay) may have been necessary in order to move a person to action (to join the army), and, indeed, this may generally be the case; but by saying that high pay was a necessary condition of joining the army one is not thereby committed to holding that it is always a necessary condition: there are always cases of patriots and wartime when rewards like high pay, promotion, and travel never enter into the act of volunteering service.

this is the case, I must examine the grounds upon which certain necessary conditions are distinguished from others.*

The key to this examination lies in recalling what it is the social scientist is seeking to discover; the cause is the 'final' or 'crucial' or 'significant' necessary condition which precipitated an event: thus we must discover how significance or finality are decided in these cases. In other words, while it is true that all the necessary conditions are equally important for the event, they are not equally important for the observer. Some of them are of far greater interest to him, so much so that he will call them causes and differentiate them from the 'mere conditions'. The question is, therefore, on what basis this distinction can be drawn. I suggest that there are at least three separate criteria which are relevant here: abnormality, responsibility, and controllability. As will become clear, each of them is an instance of the same general pattern in which, on the basis of his own interests and values, the observer singles out some set of conditions from the rest and decides that it is the cause; it is for this reason that there is an irreducibly discretionary element in any ascription of causality.**

The first criterion for distinguishing causes from other necessary conditions is abnormality. The reason for this has to do with the context within which the social scientist inquires to know the explanation of an

* I am assuming in the following that the conditions are all, indeed, necessary, and that this has been established. In other words, I am assuming that without conditions x, y, and z event b could not have occurred, and the question is, which of these is the cause?

** Since some of what I have to say about two of these criteria - abnormality and controllability - would also apply to the natural sciences, it might be objected that I am also committed to holding that these sciences are value-laden as well. But this is not the case; the natural sciences are not concerned with social life, institutions, practices, and actions, and thus they do not betray interests and assumptions regarding the lives of men as they interact with one another. The difference between the two sciences will become more apparent in light of the examples I employ to illustrate my points about causality.

event; for often he finds an event puzzling, and therefore seeks an explanation for it, because it departs from the normal course of events which he has come to expect. Given this background to his investigation, the basis upon which he will decide which of the various necessary conditions is a cause is thereby sharply defined: for the 'mere conditions' will be those factors which are normally present, since they cannot account of themselves for the occurrence of something extraordinary, while the cause will be that unusual factor which intrudes into the normal situation and 'makes the difference' between the normal and the unexpected. The cause is that which intervenes into the usual course of events, precipitates an accident or a strange outcome, and is thereby the crucial factor. The cause of an event in this case is defined as the interfering catalyst of an unusual event.

But which antecedent condition fits this requirement can never be a totally impersonal decision. In the first place, it ought to be apparent that what is normal and what is not depends a great deal on the context of one's inquiry, i.e. on the vantage point from which one examines the case, and therefore on what one takes to be the 'given' situation. Thus, from the vantage point of a government advisor the cause of inflation might be the wage demand of the trade unions; from that of an Opposition spokesman it might be the government's military spending (which the government has taken as 'given' granted the foreign policy requirements of the current international situation); from that of the trade unions it might be the business practice of maintaining income differentials between managerial and union staff (while business takes this to be usual); to an economist it might be the structural rigidity in certain capital goods industries; to a communist economist it might be the inherent instability of a market economy, etc. etc. What one decides to be the cause will depend on the field with implicit reference to which the question is asked, how wide the

net is cast, and what the scientist is prepared to accept as given and usual.

But there is another 'subjective factor' here which leads into the second criterion of causality, responsibility. For in the social sciences what often must be accepted as normal or judged abnormal are the actions of men, and it is for this reason that what is picked to be the cause of an event is in part a reflection of the 'moral expectations' of the scientist towards those whom he is observing. By 'moral expectations' I mean those presumptions on the part of the scientist concerning what it is reasonable to expect men to do in the particular circumstances in which they find themselves, and thus what is normal or usual in those circumstances. A cause will often be some omission from a standard routine which others had come to expect would be performed and which the scientist judges ought to have been performed by the agent(s) concerned; or the commission of some unusual deed which produced the effects the scientist is examining and of which the agent had foreknowledge and could have done otherwise; or the interference in some practice or affair through carelessness, dereliction of duty, or negligence. In the world of social action, the social scientist is often actually engaged in determining the moral responsibility for an act. Thus, for example, questions about the causes of wars are often questions about the moral responsibility of the statesmen and legislators involved, what each might have done to prevent it, what each thought to be the probable outcome of his decisions, about the conventions, treaties, and practices in existence at the time, about the political, economic, and military constraints operating on them and the strengths of these factors, and other such questions to ascertain the relative accountability of the men involved; as such, these are not merely scientific questions and they cannot be answered on merely scientific grounds. It is for this reason that often to decide which necessary condition is the cause cannot be done apart from

one's moral judgements of those whose behaviour one is trying to explain.

There is a third criterion which the social scientist often adopts in order to settle questions about causality; this is controllability. Here the identification of a cause from among the other conditions is dictated by the scientist's practical interests. The cause is that necessary condition which, by its accessibility to techniques at the scientist's disposal, would allow him to influence the outcome of its interaction with the other conditions, or which, by its removal through the scientist's intervention, would permit him to prevent the occurrence of the expected effect. Thus, the cause of the famine is not the drought but the failure of the government to provide for the possibility of the drought, or the poor land distribution which prevents grain from being stored, etc.; the cause of inflation is not the market system (unless one is a revolutionary who believes this system can be overthrown), but too much money in circulation, etc. The cause of an event in this case is that condition which, because it is open to the scientist's manipulation, is the means by which he can control the events he is investigating.

But controllability is also a partly subjective criterion. In the first place, what sort of conditions may count as conditions for manipulation cannot be decided merely in light of existing knowledge, but also must take into account personal values as well. It may be that, because one can control the performance of the children at school through chemical stimulation of certain nodes of the brain, the behavioural scientist might well wish to ascribe causal significance with respect to school disorder to the functioning of the childrens' brain; but another scientist, morally opposed to such interference in the lives of children, would not even consider the brain as a possible cause in this case if there were other factors which might be cited as well (e.g. the structure of the classroom). In the second place, there is the problem of the sort of control the scien-

tist has in mind; by this I mean that controllability by itself is often too gross a criterion on its own, and it is thus modified to mean 'controllable by reasonably efficient and economical means'. Here again, what is economical and what is efficient depends to some extent on the values of the scientist, what range of costs he will permit, what sort of efficiency is reasonable.

In all of these cases the interests and purposes and values of the social scientist are inevitably drawn into his investigation of the cause of an event.* When any social event occurs which interests a social scientist, it is always possible to mention dozens of factors which have made a significant contribution to its occurrence. Even events in the distant past (e.g. childhood; past historical events and decisions; etc.) may qualify, and the same is true of geographically separated events and conditions. To cite one of these, or any set of them, as the cause, and thereby to distinguish it from the other necessary conditions, is to invoke pragmatic or moral criteria (of abnormality, of responsibility, of controllability) as standards in terms of which such a judgement can be made. But it is for this reason that to make a decision of causality in these instances is to invite a rebuttal from other scientists who are partisans of one or other of the causal candidates: for they may be appealing to different criteria, or to different considerations of the same criterion. Judgements about the causes of action are not merely the outcome of scientific observation and procedure; they necessarily reflect the personality of the scientist as well.

Earlier (in section 6.2.1 above) I argued that causal explanations in the social sciences, at least in so far as these sciences dealt with

* Nowhere am I implying that the decision as to causality is purely arbitrary. I am only asserting that such a decision cannot be made without reference to one's practical interests and values, which is quite another thing.

human action, could not serve as the basis of an objective science of policy because these explanations, far from providing laws which give the sufficient conditions of an event, were rooted in, and depended upon, verstehen explanations - themselves a form of moral explanation. In this section (6.2.2) I have been considering another meaning of the word cause, namely, the 'final' or 'crucial' necessary condition for the occurrence of a particular act or type of act. But here again the purposes, interests, and values of the scientist are inextricably bound up with deciding which conditions are the causes and which are not; and thus, this 'sort' of causality cannot serve as the foundation for a policy science either. What is taken to be the cause of an action always embodies the moral values and commitments of the social scientist offering this sort of explanation.

6.3. Functional Explanations

6.3.1. Functional Explanations in Social Science

The social scientist desires to explain the social activities and practices he observes not only by revealing the reasons for performing them which an actor had, nor only by searching out the causes which preceded and shaped them; he is also interested in providing an account of the unintended consequences of these acts, and the reason for this is that he is also anxious to explain the pattern of interactions which identifies the social actors as being members of a society. Now, as a social actor himself, any theorist is quite well aware that the outcomes of a man's actions will reverberate in directions which he could not have foreseen, and that they will touch the lives of many people in ways in which he could not have foretold. But the social scientist qua social scientist, because he looks at the interactions of people from a distance, will also be aware of a dimension of social action of which the actors themselves will perhaps not be cognizant, and this is that the effects of these actions seem to reinforce the actions, beliefs, and roles of the other members of the

society in an orderly way. In other words, these undesigned consequences form a pattern which cannot be explained by referring to the intentions of the individuals concerned, and also which seem to mutually sustain one another, and thus to serve the purpose of maintaining the structure of the group. From the point of view of the whole, the repercussions of social action seem unintended but not accidental.

There is another situation which is related to this and with which the social scientist cannot fail to be impressed. This is the phenomenon that the rules, practices, and institutions of a society seem to be structurally interrelated, mutually reinforcing one another such that they seem to form what may be called a 'system'. This observation is strengthened by the fact that this structure remains relatively stable over time, despite a constantly fluctuating membership; a society seems to have a continuing existence of its own, a permanence that transcends its particular members. It is these sorts of considerations, combined with the common experience of society as being over against oneself as an external force, that have led many social scientists to claim that sociology has a particular and distinct subject matter, namely, the study of society itself, the ways in which it maintains its continuity and insures the continuing order of its interrelating parts. Because of this, a social scientist, besides examining the actions of individuals, will also want to discuss social wholes as ongoing systems which persist in an environment.

Both of these phenomena underlie the appeal which functional explanations have in the social sciences. For a functional explanation attempts to explain a given practice or institution not by revealing how it arose, nor by disclosing the purposes it was intended to fulfill, but by explaining why it continues to exist, and this by demonstrating the contribution its effects make to the continued existence of the social whole of which it is a part. The functional view uncovers the ways in which the (unintended)

consequences of an act or the (unforseen) effects of an institutional practice rebound within, and modify, a whole host of other social factors, demonstrating how such effects reinforce and strengthen that complex of factors which comprises the social whole, and in the absence of which the original act or practice could not continue to exist. The analogy with physiological explanations ought to be apparent, and indeed the organic metaphor was a great spur in the development of functionalism.¹

But this is not to say that the nature of functionalism is at all clear - indeed, deciding exactly what it is, is one of the major preoccupations in the social scientific literature.² It is not my intention to enter this debate directly, for, as will be seen in 6.3.2., my arguments against a scientific understanding of functional explanation apply to almost all the various conceptions of functionalism. It will only be necessary for me, therefore, to specify what appears to me to be the minimum requirements of a functional explanation in order to proceed with my argument. But before doing this, I wish to prune out those interpretations of functional explanation which identify them with either one of the two kinds of explanations which I have already examined and found to be morally non-neutral.

There are two broad conceptions of functionalism which differ over what they take to be the foundation of any complete functional explanation: the first of these asserts that to explain a social practice functionally is ultimately to demonstrate how it satisfies the needs and wants of the

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1. For example, Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown both make explicit reference to society as an organism, and based their remarks about functional explanation on such a metaphor. For Durkheim, cf. supra pg.75-76; for Radcliffe-Brown: "The concept of function as applied to human societies is based on an analogy between social life and organic life." Structure and Function in Primitive Society, pg.178.
 2. cf., e.g., F.M. Cancian, "Varieties of Functional Analysis", International Encyclopedia of Social Science, vol.VI, pgs.29-41; Robert Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (1968 edition), chap 3 esp. pgs.73-91; E. Nagel, The Structure of Science, pgs.520-526.

individual members of a society; the second interpretation explains an institution as functional in terms of the contribution it makes to the total life of the community, i.e. to the social system. In this section I want to assume that a functional explanation is of the latter type, and this for a very good reason. For in so far as functional explanations rest on an (often unexpressed) understanding of the requirements and desires of the individual members of a social order, rather than on the requisites of that order itself, then what I have argued in 6.1. about verstehen explanations becomes relevant here as well.*

* In this footnote I would like to develop an argument similar to 6.2.1. to the effect that all functional explanations do ultimately rest on some conception of the needs and wants of the individual members of the society, and that therefore functional explanations presuppose some sort of verstehen explanation. In so far as I am successful in this, and in so far as what I argued in 6.1. regarding the moral aspects of verstehen explanation is true, then, of course, functional explanations cannot be a value-free form of explanation. I confine these remarks to a footnote because they do not comprise my main argument against functionalism, and I do not want them to detract from it. In the following I do not mean to imply that there is no difference between a functional and a verstehen explanation, nor to deny that they are both important, doing different jobs by singling out different features of the situation for analysis. I mean only to suggest that ultimately functions rest on reasons.

That functional explanations ultimately rest on some conception of human needs, purposes, and wants, is not really that striking of a statement even if one confines himself to functionalist literature itself. Malinowski, for example, held that all social practices and major institutions in the end could be seen as functional only in so far as it could be understood how they satisfied the biological and psychological needs of a given society's members. (cf. B. Malinowski, "The Functional Theory", in A Scientific Theory of Culture (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1944), pgs.147-176). At a less systematic level, most of what are called 'functional analyses' that fill contemporary journals are really nothing more than attempts to uncover consequences of a practice that might be 'good for' some group or other in the society, and thus a reason why such a practice is continued to be performed. Here what is 'good', of course, depends on what one takes to be the desires of the individuals involved. (On this point, cf. A. Ryan, The Philosophy of Social Science (London, 1970), pgs.181-191). Again, Robert Merton, in his celebrated paper 'Manifest and Latent Functions' (in Social Theory and Social Structure, enlarged edition, 1968, pgs.73-138) writes that "functional analysis invariably assumes or explicitly operates with some conception of the motivation of individuals involved in a social system" (ibid. pg.104). And later in this paper his example of a paradigm functional explanation is really little more than an attempt to show

In the second place, I want to assume that a functional explanation is more than a special form of causal explanation. In other words, I am

how machine politics in American cities confere benefits on certain groups such as immigrants, i.e. an explanation rooted in the rewards and costs idiom of verstehen explanation.

Lastly, many of those attempts to construct a list of 'functional prerequisites' of a society are based on a conception of human needs. (cf. W. Goldschmidt, Comparative Functionalism (Cambridge University Press, 1966), or Talcott Parsons, The Social System, pgs.26-36 (paperback edition, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1970). (The only other alternative here seems to be to define society in a certain way and then to draw out the logical implications of such a definition and call these 'functional prerequisites'. This is the procedure adopted in Aberle, Cohen, Davis, Levy and Sutton, "The Functional Prerequisites of a Society", Ethics, vol. 60, 1950, pgs.100-111. For example, they include in their definition of a society that the group must be recruited "at least in part by the sexual reproduction of its members", and then list as one of the functional prerequisites "provision for sexual recruitment"; most of their prerequisites are implied in the definitional phrase "a self-sufficient system of action," for example, "shared cognitive orientations" or "socialization".). For the functional prerequisites are those conditions necessary for society to continue existing, and this, in turn, depends upon the social order fulfilling those needs which provide the reason why man is a social creature in the first place (e.g. physical safety), or those wants which man has because he is a social creature (e.g. some kind of order). For a clear account of the prerequisites of a legal system in terms of the needs and purposes of men, cf. H.L.A. Hart, The Concept of Law, Oxford University Press, 1961, pgs.186-195. There Hart clearly spells out what is involved in determining functional requisites: "Reflections on some very obvious generalizations - indeed truisms - concerning human nature (that men desire survival) and the world in which men live, show that as long as these hold good, there are certain rules of conduct which any social organization must contain if it is to be viable ... in each case the facts mentioned afford a reason why, given survival as an aim, law and morals should include a specific content. The general form of the argument is simply that without such a content laws and morals could not forward the minimum purposes which men have in associating with each other." (ibid. pgs.188-189). This point about prerequisites is especially significant, for here it seems that even the 'Holistic School', which treats social orders as systems, must finally make assumptions about individual actors, since the 'needs of the whole' are in part determined by the needs of its individual members.

The reason why this is the case in much of the social scientific literature, and that functional explanations do imply an (often tacit) conception of human purposes and desires, stems from what I have already written about social action. For contrary to the situation in biology, in which a functional explanation makes no mention of the needs of the parts, and in which the explanation rests entirely on a conception of the needs of the whole organism, the 'parts' of a social system know what they are doing. Indeed, the social system is a system only in so far as this is the case, for to be a member of society one must have accepted certain rules and have adopted certain recognized roles.

presupposing that functional explanation means something more than a correlation of variables such that a change in one can be systematically related to a change in the other, this 'other' being either another part of

Functional explanations in biology can stop at the level of the system, and discuss the behaviour of an individual part with reference to feedback loops, structural compensation and factor maintenance, all which depend upon the requirements of the organism itself, precisely because the parts of a body automatically respond to one another. But social actors respond because of their perceptions of themselves as members, and all social behaviour, even that which is a response to the activities of others, depends ultimately on the knowledge and apprehensions of the actor, and this because otherwise it cannot be composed of social acts.

It is for this reason that a prerequisite of all systems explanations of human activities, though not of physiological processes, is that the members of the society accept its institutions and the force of its rules. To assert that a social practice *x* has a function *y* in system *S* is to assert that the members of this system have at least tacitly assented to the rules which govern this type of situation, and that their behaviour is in conformity with the requirements of the roles they are performing. But this, in turn, necessitates the mention of the satisfactions members receive by being members and thus acting in a certain way. For why men accept certain rules, and react in a certain patterned way, ultimately depends, not on what the system requires, but on the benefits and costs that these sorts of actions have to the individuals involved (including the benefit of being a member of the society itself), as well as their needs and wants in terms of which they act. It is by this line of reasoning that, in following out the implications inherent in a functional explanation, one finally arrives at the point where a verstehen explanation of the behaviour of the members of the society is required.

How then are we to understand the notion of 'functional explanation' in terms of this action approach? In attempting to give a complete account of the social behaviour he observes, the social theorist undertakes to view the social actors from a distance, to see them as members of a social whole who share a certain body of norms, goals, aspirations, cognitive orientations and beliefs. Adopting this stance permits him to see what the social actors themselves seldom do, namely, how the practices of an individual or a subgroup of individuals relate to those of the other members of the group in such a way that the overall pattern of relationships is reinforced. It is armed with this kind of knowledge that the social scientist is able to offer an explanation of why a particular social practice continues over a period of time: for he can show that a practice has consequences whose ultimate effect is to strengthen the system of behaviour, i.e. the stable ways of acting characteristic of this group of individuals, a system which in turn serves as the basis for the practice itself. Thus it is that many social actions are unintentionally and indirectly self-promoting, and it is this feature which counts for their continued performance. Functional explanations give us the ability to understand how it is that undesigned effects of an act are not accidental, but blend into a way of life; for they demonstrate how such an act sets in motion a train of responses which rein-

the social system or the social system itself. This is a conception of function borrowed from mathematics (in which a variable y is said to be a

force the various practices of the group as a whole, and therefore which ultimately make the continued performance of such an act more likely.

To discuss actions in the setting of a social whole, and to survey how various interactions are interrelated in such a way that they affect one another while maintaining the common norms, beliefs, etc. which unite the separate members, it is useful to talk in functional terms, and to discuss the whole as if it were an existing thing composed of parts which could have no existence outside it, and which automatically responded to one another. But when we do this we should not let metaphor and analogy deceive us; when a social scientist discusses the properties of social systems he is ultimately talking about what individual human beings may be shown to think and say and do. Functionalism allows us to understand how the unintended consequences of one's acts have social significance in a predictable but often surprising way; but it does not follow from this that they are incompatible with the action approach.

Indeed, the opposite is the case, and severing connections with mention of the actions of individuals, and concentrating on the system as a whole, is fatal to functionalist aspirations. Many commentators have remarked on the stringent logical requirements which any explanation must meet if it attempts to explain an event in terms of its contribution to the maintenance of the existing system. (cf. E. Nagel, "A Formalization of Functionalism", Logic Without Metaphysics, Glencoe, III, 1956, pgs.247-283); basically, these come down to demonstrating that the events must be a necessary condition for the system's existence and that the system has means of reacting in such a way as to insure that the event continues to occur. On the basis of these requirements it has often been concluded (cf. E. Nagel, Structure of Science, pgs.526-535; R. Rudner, The Philosophy of Social Science, pgs.107-109; R. Brown, Explanation in Social Science, pgs.112-123) that it is highly unlikely that any truly functionalist account of society will ever be given, or that there is much profit in even searching for such an account (cf. A. Ryan, The Philosophy of Social Sciences, pgs.191-194). Adopting a 'holistic' approach analogous to that in physiology, in which one explains the parts in terms of the needs of the system as a whole, seems ironically to eliminate the possibility of there being a functional explanation in social science.

But surely, it may be objected to this, social scientists do give functional explanations of some sort? It is here that there arises an interesting conclusion which follows from what I have been arguing. It is that my account of functionalism does not demand this impossible sort of information in order for there to be an explanation, and therefore I am not obliged to characterize current function explanations as 'crude stopgaps' (Brown, op.cit. pg.132). On the contrary, my account makes perfectly good sense of what social scientists for the most part actually do, and accepts that their functional accounts are reasonable explanations of social behaviour. For what I have been attempting to show is that what social scientists have in fact been doing in offering functional explanations is providing an account of the unintended consequences of a certain action which can be, if necessary, unpacked into a series of verstehen explanations, i.e. which explain by demonstrating how these consequences reinforce the practices common to all the members, the

function of the variable x when y depends upon x in such a way that the fixing of x determines one or more corresponding values of y), but here it seems to be nothing more than a straightforwardly causal explanation. Now this assumption is at variance with the position propounded by several influential writers who have argued that functionalism is not a peculiar form of explanation at all,* but this is no matter. For in so far as they are correct, and functional explanation is only a disguised form of causal explanation, then what I have argued in 6.2. on Causes is relevant to functionalism as well.

In the third place, I want to distinguish between a 'loose' and a 'strict' functionalism, and to permit the loose variety to qualify as a legitimate explanation.** I do this for two reasons: first, because what

roles each has undertaken, and the needs and wants he has in performing that role, all of which have a return effect on the act which we are trying to explain in the first place. This is what is meant by 'fitting it into the whole'.

In all of this the functionalist seems to be caught between the Scylla of having no real explanations and the Charybdis of having functional explanations only at the price of seeing them 'reduced' to being dependent on verstehen explanations, and thus (at least if what I argued in section 6.1. is correct) not morally neutral.

* Some writers have merely defined functional explanations in this way: cf. M. Levy, "Structural-Functional Analysis", Int'l Encyclopedia of Social Science, vi, pgs.21-28; and K. Davis, "The Myth of Functional Analysis as a Special Method in Sociology and Anthropology", Am. Soc. Review, Dec. 1959 vol.24 no.6 pgs.757-772. Other writers have argued either that functional explanations are disguised causal explanations (cf. C.G. Hempel, "The Logic of Functional Analysis" in Gross, ed. A Symposium of Sociological Theory, esp. pgs.282-284), or the lesser thesis that all functional explanations can be replaced by strictly causal accounts without any loss of explanatory power (cf. E. Nagel, The Structure of Science, pgs.401-428). Talcott Parsons seems to agree with this last view, but also believes that it will be some time before the requisite information is available, and that in the meantime functional explanations are a 'second best' option which will disappear after some time. (cf. T. Parsons, The Social System, pgs.19-20, and Essays in Sociological Theory, pgs.215-218).

** This is not strictly correct, for, as Nagel demonstrates (The Structure of Science, pgs.532-535), what I am calling 'loose functionalism' does not satisfy the logical requirements of a scientific functional explanation, and thus cannot really explain in the scientific sense at all (though it may explain in the sense that I argued in the long foot-

passes for functional explanation in contemporary social science is of the looser type; and second, because my argument in 6.3.2. to the effect that functional explanations of human institutions are a form of moral explanation is applicable equally to both. Strict functional explanations are those which explain a given trait y by demonstrating that the persistence of a system S is a sufficient condition for the existence of y , and they do this by establishing that some condition x is necessary for the maintenance of system S and that trait y is necessary for the fulfillment of this condition. It is otiose to say that the kind of information required here is formidable. Looser functional explanations, on the other hand, merely state that trait y (but not only this trait) produces or helps to produce condition x , and that x is a contributor (but not a necessary one) to the maintenance of system S . All of those studies which point out how a certain practice or institution reinforces the whole complex of other factors which comprise the social system, and which also attempt to predict the repercussions which its suppression might have on the system, are of this looser variety of functional explanation.

Granting the assumptions that I have made - assumptions intended to place the functionalist case in the most favourable light possible - what are the minimum conditions an explanation must satisfy in order to qualify for what I want to call a functional explanation? The essential feature of this type of explanation is that it relates some part to a whole such that the part is explained in terms of the role it plays in maintaining this whole in some kind of stable order. Thus, Durkheim characterizes functional explanation as the attempt "to show how the phenomena comprising it (the social organism) combine in such a way as to put society in harmony

note above). For a similar argument, cf. F. Cancian, Int'l Encyclopedia of Social Science, vi, pgs.30-34; R. Rudner, The Philosophy of Social Science, pgs.107-109; R. Brown, Explanation in Social Science, pgs.112-115.

with itself and with the environment external to it."¹ Radcliffe-Brown writes that "the function of any recurrent activity, such as the punishment of a crime, or a funeral ceremony, is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of structural continuity."² Again, Malinowski declared that the functional analysis of culture "aims at the explanation of the anthropological facts at all levels of development by their function, by the part which they play within the integral system of culture, by the manner in which they are related to each other in the system, and by the manner in which this system is related to the physical surroundings."³ A functional viewpoint examines social acts in so far as they occur within some ordered context which persists as a unit under varying circumstances, and the whole point of a functional explanation is to relate observed practices, rules or institutions to this unit, seeing how they aid in the system's operation. The essential aspect of a functional explanation is the notion of a part contributing something to the maintenance of the whole which sustains it.

6.3.2. Functional Explanations as Moral Explanations

The argument that functional explanations as I have just defined them are in fact moral explanations contains two steps. The first concerns the notion of a social whole, and attempts to show that all functional explanations of social practices and institutions are inherently subjective because they presuppose a conception of the nature of a specific social whole, a matter which can only be established by introducing the personal views of the scientist. The second step of the argument is centered on the notion

1. Emile Durkheim, Rules of the Sociological Method, p.97.

2. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Structure and Function in Primitive Society, pg.180.

3. Bronislaw Malinowski, "Anthropology", Encyclopedia Britannica, supplementary volume 1, New York and London, 1936, pg.132.

of 'function', and endeavors to demonstrate that to assign a function to an institution or a practice is thereby to take a moral stance towards it, and this because to ascribe a function is thereby to create the primary (though by no means necessarily the only) criterion in terms of which to judge its worth. A functional explanation depends on what the scientist assumes the nature of a given society to be, an assumption which cannot be justified on empirical grounds, but which reflects the subjective opinions of the theorist; moreover, such a subjective explanation has moral import, and is therefore not a merely 'academic' or 'verbal' matter, for to attribute a function to a social institution or conventional activity is to establish an evaluative structure by which to assess the success or failure of such social activities or their practitioners.

Functional explanations require some conception of the whole in terms of which the part is to be explained. Now this presents no major difficulty in physiology where the whole is some living organism, a physically enduring unit about which there is a generally recognized set of empirically observable variables which constitute the defining attributes of its existence. In the vast majority of cases, whether a biological entity is alive or not can be settled to the satisfaction of all parties. But the situation is radically different in the case of a social whole, because such 'entities' are of a different ontological category; social systems are not physical units existing in space, their contours cannot be plotted, their parts cannot be mapped or measured. What is most important, those structures and functions necessary for their existence, comparable to the 'vital functions' of biology, cannot be described simply on the basis of observations and physically verifiable calculations. Thus what constitutes the identity of a society, what criteria one is to employ to answer questions about social survival, cannot merely be an empirically decidable matter.* To discover

* I am excluding the rare and trivial case where the members of a social group either die or are dispersed so that the social group ceases to exist.

whether a society continues to exist one cannot just go out and look at it, because 'it' does not exist in the sense that bodies, hearts, and automobiles do.

This difficulty is compounded by the fact that social systems are constantly changing their form in response to external pressures and because of continuous internal re-adjustments among its members. In the face of these changes, how is one to decide which fundamentally alter the very nature of the system and which are only minor, and to do so on evidence which is independently verifiable? Social arrangements may seem to shift only a little, and yet one may well wish to say that the 'system' is no longer the same (for example, after a couple of centuries the Bishop of Rome gained predominance over the other bishops of the Church: I would want to say that the Church was no longer that founded by Christ, because this change in authority fundamentally altered its nature; others would want to argue that this is not the case, and that essential apostolic continuity had been maintained. How is this to be settled without employing one conception of the Church to the definitional exclusion of the other conception?). Alternatively, the structural arrangements of a society may shift dramatically and yet the system be said to retain its essential identity (for example, some would argue that, as a result of the economic, social, and political changes instituted between 1940-1950 in the direction of Socialism, Britain was no longer the same 'system' as before; others might plausibly hold the opposite).

In considering these questions of a social system's survival and its identity, it is apparent that inquiries into a society's existence cannot be responded to simply by referring to empirical evidence, and this because the more basic question, what is the nature of this social system?, is not an empirical one that can be answered solely in terms of observation statements. For one does not encounter a social system as one might encounter an animal or a body, nor does one really observe a social system, although

he might observe people acting in an organized way. For the assertion that a number of men comprise a society is tantamount to claiming that one has discerned certain kinds of interaction in the behaviour of those he is observing which is intelligible only by identifying these men as members of a group. But this means that the nature of a particular group is partially determined by the observer himself, by what intelligibility he discerns; what is called a 'social whole' is partly a matter of his own construction. The nature of a given social system is not determinable apart from the beliefs of the individual theorist simply because a social system is in part a creation by the theorist himself.

Obviously this creation is not merely an arbitrary act; a great deal depends on the manner in which the members in fact do act, and also on what they report. But there is also an arbitrary element present: for what the observer (or a participant for that matter) takes to be the essential aspects of this social whole will partly be a function of what needs, wants, and purposes he sees the social order as satisfying, and the resultant structures he takes to be essential to this task.* The nature of a social group is partly determined by one's conception of its role in the lives of its members, and this, of course, is not an empirical matter. Two theorists may have at one time in history disputed about what a heart is and what it does; but such an argument was always in theory settleable because the evidence required to conclude it was independent of the opinions of the two men: one day it would become possible to look at the heart and to see the blood gushing from the aorta. Unfortunately the case is different in arguing about a social 'organ' or a social 'body'; for here, what these social entities are cannot be decided apart from the beliefs and opinions of the disputants for the logical reason that such entities are conceptual in

* This recalls the arguments about group concepts in 5.2.2.

nature, and that their character is partly the expression of just these beliefs and opinions.

There is a corollary to this fact about a system's existence; this is that, because there is nothing in social science comparable to the criteria of survival in the physiological sciences, there cannot be equivalent criteria of social health either. For whether a system is functioning optimally depends on what the system is. Thus, what constitutes the proper performance of a given machine can be quite rigorous and can be generally accepted because its nature, the mechanism having been designed to operate in a specified manner, is not a matter of debate; and the healthy functioning of the heart can be established within quite narrow limits because its contribution to the whole, and the nature of the organism of which it is a part, can be determined by any scientist with the proper tools and techniques for observation. But precisely because the character of a specific social whole can only be determined in light of the definition a theorist offers of this system, a definition which rests in part on his personal view of the role the society plays in the life of its members, what it is for this system to function well must also be in part a subjective matter.

Furthermore, because there cannot be empirically established criteria of proper performance, other subsidiary notions which are parasitic on the notion of health cannot be established in terms of objective criteria either. I am thinking of such notions as equilibrium, integration, adaptation, rigidity, responsiveness, breakdown, development and growth. For all of these have no meaning until one knows what the 'normal' functioning of the total unit is, such that its parts can be in equilibrium, truly adapting to a changed environment and not breaking down, etc. All of these concepts, and countless others to be found in the explanations of social behaviour of both social scientists and common folk, involve an assessment on the part of the observer in terms of the operation of the whole, and this, in turn,

depends on the appraisal one makes about the purpose of the whole.

It is on the basis of considerations such as these that one is forced to conclude that all functional explanations in social science must be at least partially subjective; for one cannot decide what a given practice or institution contributed to the maintenance of the social whole of which it is a part without a clear notion of what this social whole is, and deciding this is not a matter that can be settled on empirical evidence alone. For a social whole is a conceptual construction on the part of the scientist in order to account for the pattern of rules, roles, beliefs, and actions which he discerns in the social behaviour of a group of men, a construction at least partially based on his opinions as to what he thinks these patterns are for. Moreover, it is only on the basis of this conception that other questions about the social organism relevant to functional theory, questions concerning its existence, survival, identity, and health, can be answered. Functional explanations presuppose a theory of the whole before they can have any meaning, but such a theory cannot be objectively established; on the contrary, one scientist's views may always be debated by another who holds different opinions about specific social groups and the purposes they have in the lives of their members.

Moreover, not only are functional explanations fundamentally subjective, they have moral implications as well; for, as I will demonstrate momentarily, to offer a functional explanation of a social institution is thereby to establish the standards in terms of which the performance of this institution or its participating members may be assessed. The upshot of this is that which functional explanation one gives is not of mere theoretical interest, a verbal matter with no connection to the actual world of social relationships; indeed, the opposite is the case, for which explanation one provides has a direct bearing on the way in which one evaluates the performances of the social actors whose behaviour he is attempting to understand.

Functional explanations are a form of moral explanation because they require that the theorist adopt a moral stance towards the social practices and institutions he is explaining, in this case by creating the primary criterion by which he may judge the worth of these activities. This characteristic of having critical import for the objects of one's attempts at explanation is by no means confined to functional explanations in the social sciences. In fact, it is a characteristic of all function-words. Thus, to define an object by means of a functional definition is simultaneously to set up the yardstick by which to measure it. For example, to say that this metal object is a 'knife' is to say that it is an object whose primary function is cutting;* and to say this, is also to say that this particular knife is good or bad depending on whether it cuts sharply and cleanly or not. The case is similar for all tools (such as clocks, pens and cigarette lighters), for they are objects which have been manufactured for a specific purpose, and can be assessed in terms of whether or not they achieve this purpose. The case is also the same for biological organs which have a job to perform in the life of a cell or a body or a plant. Thus, to say that the function of a root is to gather moisture and nutriments from the soil without which the plant would die is thereby to say that a root is good or bad depending on whether it accomplishes these tasks and does so efficiently. The same principle pertains to lungs, eyes, and other bodily organs.

At this point we are quite close to the functional explanations of the social sciences, and, indeed, their case is no different.** To assert

* For the moment I am assuming that knives have only one function. This is obviously an unrealistic assumption, but I do not think that adding functions (e.g., stabbing or scraping) materially affects the argument.

** Except, as I have already demonstrated, that what function a social institution has is a subjective matter, whereas the determination of the function of an organ is not subjective. There is also the difference that the functions assigned in physiology or technology only have critical import for the object being explained, but that they have moral import in the social sciences. Why this is so I will explain in a moment.

that the function(s) of a given social institution, say Parliament, is to perform a certain necessary role in a society, for example, to translate the needs and wants of the members of constituencies into precise political demands and to satisfy these demands by allocating economic, legal, and social resources, is to set the (admittedly quite vague in this instance) standards which delimit the range of considerations relevant to ascertaining the success or failure of that institution. If one were to ascribe a different function (for example, to provide a legitimizing cover for class domination), one would, by this act, alter the range of considerations relevant to calculating the worth of the institution. To speak of a role in the social whole is to speak of a job to be performed, an end to be achieved; and to place a social practice in this purposive light is to establish the means by which to assess the merits of such social behaviour.

As I noted in section 2.5.1., Functionalism has often been accused of being value laden because it was felt that it betrays a conservative orientation towards the institutions the scientist was examining; to ascribe a function, it was claimed, was also to judge that the institution was useful to the whole and therefore good. Now this sort of argument against functional explanation is fallacious, because one can hold without contradiction that an institution is useful and that it should not be permitted to persist, and this because either one thinks it immoral or too inefficient, or because one believes that the society which it helps to maintain ought to be destroyed. I mention this spurious accusation so frequently levelled at the functionalists in order to distinguish it from my own position. For I am not claiming that to give a functional explanation is actually to judge the institution as good or bad; rather, I am claiming that one thereby establishes clear and explicit standards by which one may evaluate its success or failure as an institution. Thus, one may explain a political party by proposing that its function is to attain power and to further the influence of the

groups it represents, and one may, on the basis of the standards implicit in such an explanation, judge that a particular party is successful; and yet it is also possible to believe, and still be consistent with my position, that this party, though successful, ought to be abolished, perhaps because one is a firm totalitarian. But even though functional explanations are not covert value judgements, with regards to social affairs they nevertheless still involve the evaluative opinions of the observer toward those whom he is studying; for even if the theorist objects to the institution or practice he has explained in functional terms, he still has committed himself, by his explanation, to admitting only certain considerations in judging this institution's performance. To assign a function is to express an opinion on what the practice ought to be like, is to provide an ideal in terms of which the acts of the specific practioners, as practioners in an institution, may be appraised.

But, one may object, how is it that, as a result of the above argument, functional explanations in social science are to be taken as forms of moral explanation, while those in biology, even though they are admittedly subject to the same considerations, are not? One might wish to admit that to determine the function of the heart forces one to adopt a certain 'evaluative posture' towards it, and still argue that such a posture does not express a moral viewpoint; why are the social sciences different? In the first place, there is the obvious point that in the social sciences we are dealing with men, and that the outcomes of our assessments of their performances often issue in acts of reward or punishment. But there is a far more important point here; for it is at this juncture that my earlier remarks on the essential subjectivity of functional explanations in social science are relevant. Contrary to the situation in biology, in the social sciences one's 'evaluative posture' is rooted, not in objective, scientific observations which are empirically testable, but instead on one's appraisal of

the nature of the social whole he is trying to explain. Functional explanations in the social sciences are a form of moral explanation because they are personal assessments of a social situation, assessments which contain evaluative implications for the actors involved.

Functional explanations cannot provide the basis upon which to construct an objective science of policy to transform the affairs of men. For such explanations are themselves not morally neutral, but express the subjective opinions of an individual theorist as to what a specific institution or practice ought to be accomplishing.

7. Ends and Means: The Social Engineer

But the further these disciples (of science) advance in this study the further and further are they removed not only from the possibility, but even from the very thought of, solving life's problems.

Leo Tolstoy, What Then Must We Do?
Chap. xxxi.

In trying to demonstrate the impossibility of replacing a large area of conventional politics by a 'policy science', I have confined my attention to one assumption which lies at the root of this hope - that there can be a value-free social science which would serve as the basis of this new discipline - and have argued that this assumption is untenable because logically unrealizable. To this point, my object has been to undermine the very ground upon which stands what I have been calling the technological view of man's social affairs. In this chapter I want to assume that my argument in Chapters 5 and 6 has in fact been erroneous, that I have been mistaken in denying the possibility of an objective science of social action. Instead, I now wish to presuppose that social science has arrived at a set of scientific descriptions and explanations of human action and social relationships, information which permits one to appreciate the form of an observed regularity and to predict the outcome of further actions and changes in social structure.* Given that this is the case, the next question which must be answered is, what might be the relationship between public policy and this new social science?

* As I stated at the beginning of Chapter 5, all my arguments against the idea of a value free social science were based on the premise that the social sciences were social, i.e. employed action and group concepts. This premise may now be dropped, and it may even be assumed that the 'social' sciences have been able to provide a purely mechanical account of human behaviour.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that the answer to this question proffered by the theorists of Part I, namely, that such a science can serve as the basis of a new science of policy making, a science which will provide objectively established means for the achievement of some policy end, is mistaken. My argument here is that, even if an ethically neutral social science were possible, the replacement of a part of politics by social engineering is nevertheless still impossible in theory. The argument proceeds along two main lines: the first (7.1.) claims that the means one adopts to achieve an end can never be decided on morally neutral grounds; the second (7.2.) asserts that, even if such means were determinable on neutral grounds, to adopt solutions which are technically the best in obtaining a given end is itself a political act reflecting a definite moral view as to what society ought to be like. The upshot of both of these arguments is that science can never replace politics in the making of authoritative decisions for society, and that this is true not only in selecting the goals for society, but in determining the means to achieve these goals as well. A value neutral policy science practiced by social engineers is, I conclude, a chimera.

7.1 Means and Morals

By a policy science is meant a set of techniques by which, through a series of impersonal calculations based on scientific information, a person can objectively determine the 'best' means to accomplish a specific social task. Now in order to make this kind of determination, a yardstick is required against which the various alternatives can be measured and compared, and on the basis of which one course of action can be recommended over the others. As was noted in Part I, those who advocate a policy science assume that it is the most efficient path which ought

to be adopted, and consequently efficiency is the criterion in terms of which they will assess the merits of political measures. Those who advocate a 'rationalization' of political affairs presume that the notion of efficiency provides a clear and objective standard by which anyone possessing the requisite skills could judge the best means to accomplish a prescribed goal.

Unfortunately this presumption is not well founded: for the nature of the concept of efficiency is such that it can only have practical meaning in terms of some already agreed-upon value. Efficiency is a purely formal term which signifies the ratio of amount of useful work performed to the total energy expended. As such, 'efficiency' has no substantive meaning in and of itself, and it can only achieve such a meaning if one provides a standard in terms of which work and energy can be identified and measured. Thus, if a policy scientist were to advocate the adoption of the most efficient means to a given end, one would be forced to inquire whether this meant the most efficacious path judged in light of: monetary cost? human labour? human suffering? the consumption of natural fuels? time? or what? Until this inquiry is answered, the policy scientist has not provided any way of choosing between alternative courses. The concept of efficiency is empty apart from the values which the policy maker must introduce in order to give it operational significance. It is for this reason that the idea of scientifically deciding what to do on the basis of what is the most efficient course is incoherent: for the use of this concept as a standard depends upon the nature of the preferences of the person who is doing the deciding, and these are neither scientific nor objective.

Moreover, what is true of the concept of efficiency is true of a whole host of other concepts which are sprinkled throughout the writings

of those who propose a science of policy: concepts such as the most economical, effective, beneficial, profitable, workable, expedient, functional, convenient, suitable, orderly, etc. In order for any of these concepts to be employed as criteria in the making of choices among available courses of action they must be defined in terms of some referent which gives them concrete meaning; but as soon as such a referent is assigned, other possible relevant factors are thereby excluded from consideration; and this exclusion expresses a judgment that a certain set of factors is more important or valuable for human affairs than the other sets of factors.

In all of these cases the criterion which is to serve as the standard of 'rational' choice is itself the very thing which contains the values of the policy scientist. All assessments and appraisals involve standards of measurement which enable the various alternatives to be compared and judged: which standards one adopts always express one's view about what is important in the matter at hand, mirror one's estimations of worth and significance. It is for this reason that no political judgment can be completely scientific; for such a judgment can only be made within the framework set by the standard of comparison, a framework which necessarily reflects the judge's values. Any recommendation which a policy scientist gives necessarily partakes of a certain set of values, and indeed has no meaning apart from them.

These considerations lead into a general point regarding the appropriateness of advocating that science and scientific methods be employed to make political decisions about the best means to a given end. What characterizes scientific argument, and what creates the possibility of establishing scientific proof and therefore agreement among scientists, is that in general scientists concur as to the sort of evidence which

justifies a conclusion or upsets it. Scientists are able to proceed 'rationally' because there is accord as to the standards by which proposals are to be judged. But this is precisely what is not the case in politics. In political argument, the sorts of considerations which one person uses to justify a policy are often deemed irrelevant or unimportant or unconvincing by others; and this is due to the very nature of political debate. I have just tried to demonstrate that one of the standards most often advocated as a criterion in terms of which political arguments ought to be solved, namely, efficiency, cannot be employed in policy debates without recourse to the values of the respective disputants; here, what constitutes evidence for the expenditure of effort, what sorts of considerations are relevant in the measuring of this effort, what factors are significant and which are not, cannot be determined apart from the interests and purposes of the contending parties - the very thing a 'policy science' is designed to eliminate. Moreover, there is the more general point that in the solving of political problems there are other possible criteria besides efficiency which might be relevant to the determination of the 'best means' to a given end; in this case, even what range of data is to be admitted as pertinent to the solution of the problem at hand, what is to count as a 'good reason' and what a 'bad', indeed, what a solution would even look like, are the very points which are at issue. Thus again, these questions cannot be answered 'objectively' and 'impersonally'; here, what is even being sought in the mandate, 'find the best means to a given end', cannot be ascertained apart from the values of the person proffering it. In both of these cases, it is just what is assumed in scientific debate and what makes this debate 'scientific' - standards of evidence, proof, and relevance - which are often the subject of debate in political disputes,

and it is for this reason that science and the canons of science are inappropriate as models to be emulated in political arguments in order to 'rationalize' them. In political debates, what are the relevant criteria in terms of which a solution must be sought to the problem of the best means would have to be agreed upon before scientific argument could even begin; but these criteria themselves cannot be determined on scientific grounds, i.e. they cannot be determined apart from the political values of the disputants; thus, to call for the 'scientific method' as a way for making political arguments rational is simply out of place, for it betrays a basic misunderstanding of the nature of political disagreement.

Nor is there any realistic possibility that this situation will ever reverse itself, such that political arguments about the most effective means to an end would then be amenable to scientific demonstration. For the special character of political arguments which at present prevents the scientific method from being employed to settle them, namely, that they are often disagreements over the standards by which one can establish that one course of action is superior to another, this character is the result of the fact that the contending parties have different values in life. In cooperating and competing with one another, in trying to carve out a reasonably satisfying, meaningful, and secure life for themselves and their families, men gradually form a conception of the 'Good Life', an impression of the needs and wants of their fellows, and an idea of the nature of their society, and it is these thoughts and feelings which define what is important in a political argument, what it is to further a cause or achieve an end, what is relevant criticism, what it is to prove a point.* One's aspirations, assumptions and commitments shape and

* I say realistic possibility since if the social experience of the members of a society were uniformly the same, and thus if their basic conceptions of the needs and wants of man and of society were to become identical, then there could be agreement on the kinds of evidence needed to support a conclusion in politics. But if this were to happen, it would not be science replacing politics, but conformity making politics unnecessary.

structure what one will accept as relevant in a political dispute.

A scientific conclusion to a problem is possible because there already exists prior agreement as to the requirements a possible conclusion must satisfy. A scientific determination of the 'best' means to a given political end, a determination which will solve the controversy between contending parties objectively and without recourse to their respective values, is unthinkable precisely because what is the 'best', and what constitutes evidence for it, is meaningless apart from just those values which separate the parties in the first place. Social scientific arguments cannot, of themselves, 'solve' political problems, even if these problems only involve questions of instrumentality, because of what a solution would consist is itself often the subject of debate in politics.

7.2. The Moral Character of Scientific Solutions

Even if what I am claiming is unsound, and it is possible to devise a political course of action on purely scientific grounds without appealing to the values of the decision maker, the hope for a science which will dictate a great deal of political policy is still a futile one; for even if there were such a value-free, technically determined course of action, to adopt it as a solution to a given problem is itself not a morally neutral step. To choose a technically correct answer in politics reveals a fundamental conception about what ought to be the case in human affairs. This may be seen in two distinct ways, negatively and positively.

From the negative point of view, that the most efficient, scientifically determined means is still not a value free solution in political affairs stems from the fact that any such solution is a course of action

and therefore possesses moral implications. The policy scientist, in putting forward his case for a 'rational' politics, assumes that the rationality right and the ethically good are identical; to him the worth of all 'means' is to be determined solely in terms of their instrumental value, of their contribution to the achievement of a given end. This is a purely utilitarian notion, in which no course of action intended as a means to an end is taken to be either good or bad in itself, but is to be judged simply by its consequences for the goal sought. For the policy scientist, the best course of action is the one which will promote the achievement of this end most efficiently, and in order to do this all that is needed is the empirical knowledge of how certain effects are co-ordinated with certain actions.

But this whole conception misses the central, if obvious, point that all policies, even those which are a means to an end, are courses of action, and that as such must be judged not only on the basis of technical considerations, but also on the basis of what people ought to be required or permitted to do to others. What if the most efficient (i.e. the cheapest, fastest, most simple) way to deal with the population problem is simply to exterminate large numbers of some special class of people? Indeed, the idea is not new: there is Jonathan Swift's A Modest Proposal for preventing the poor people in Ireland from being a burden to their parents and for making them beneficial to the public*; it also bears some resemblance to Hitler's 'Final Solution'; and there are some Catholics who would argue that legalized abortion to solve the population problem is in the same category as these. The point is that all these 'means' can be objected to not simply on the grounds of technical

* Who, of course, is making, through irony, the same point I am.

efficiency, but on the basis of one's antipathy to the moral values inherent in them. All political proposals, no matter how instrumental, will alter and shape the personal relations of the members of a society, will affect the relative welfare of various groups of people; as such, they have moral implications. The idea of adopting a policy without recourse to one's values, one's assumptions about how people ought to live together, betrays a basic misconception about what it is to make a decision that will intimately affect the ways in which one's fellow citizens will carry on their affairs.* The technological approach, which asserts that the only criterion of an action's worth is its relationship to a prescribed end, seems to miss the fact that politics involves making choices which will determine how people will live. It is for this reason that any proposal by a policy scientist, even one that is the most 'efficient', must still be analyzed on moral grounds.

There is another, more positive way in which one may see that choosing the scientifically determined, most efficient means betrays certain values. Too often the value preferences implicit in the rule, 'follow the dictates of the policy science', are minimized by the gloss, 'accepting science itself as a value, of course.' For contained in this

* I am not claiming here that information about the various courses of action, their monetary cost, their possible side-effects, their bearing on scarce resources, their possible outcomes, their relationship to other policy past and present, their likely reception by the parties concerned, etc., etc., is not useful data for the policy maker to have at his disposal. I am arguing instead that the decision as to which course to adopt (even if the technically most efficient means can be scientifically determined - a possibility I have tried to show is incoherent) cannot be a scientific decision rather than a political one, and this because any decision has implications for the welfare of others and thus embodies certain moral values; policy makers can never be, therefore, policy scientists, and the political element can never be eliminated from policy decisions, even those concerned to discover the best means to a given end. However, in arguing that there can never be a policy science scientifically determining the best means to a given end, I do not wish to be interpreted as also claiming what is certainly false, namely, that systematically investigated and correlated information cannot be of use to a politician in the making of his political decisions.

seemingly innocent phrase is the unspoken presumption that any rational person must accept the dictates of science; indeed, it seems almost inconceivable, in this day and age, that one could reject the findings of science and still be considered rational. Implicit in such a presumption is the tacit view that between science and other possible sources of action there can really be no choice. However, this line of reasoning only serves to obscure the fact that to opt for the scientific solution to a policy problem does preclude other, reasonably attractive alternatives, that it involves an explicit choice which rests on certain values. Thus, while it most certainly is a debatable matter whether the attitude toward the problems of men living together characteristic of some orientals, or the Amish, or the so-called Hippies ought to be universally applied or not, it is not debatable that these ways of living do represent legitimate, although anti-scientific, alternatives to social life and ways of deciding social policy. These alternatives are precluded when one chooses to adopt a scientifically determined solution. Understood in this light, the idea of a 'merely' technical solution to a given problem appears not only confused, but also distorting of what is involved in adopting such a solution.

Indeed, it seems to me that there would exist a very strong case against accepting scientific solutions to a community's political problems (even assuming that they are objective and value-free). I would argue that any such scientific progress in the solving of social problems creates an elitist and soulless world that is antipathetic to some of man's deepest needs and wants. To my way of thinking, man is a creature who is satisfied only in seeking to find solutions to problems, in overcoming obstacles, in deciding for himself, in participating in the ordering of his own life. I would also claim that he is a creature who must

have a sense of belonging to a tradition whose continuity stretches a long way backwards in time, and which slowly evolves according to the requirements of its own peculiar concrete situation. Furthermore, I would postulate that the force of these two needs, the need to act and the need for community, is likely to increase as material wealth increases, because the satisfaction of the grosser biological needs only serves to highlight these more peculiarly human needs. Unfortunately, it is precisely these essential requirements that a social technology, by its very nature, cannot satisfy; for the essence of this technology is the application of general and abstract solutions to given problems made only by scientists who have mastered the requisite techniques. In light of these considerations, I would conclude that, by 'freeing individuals from their own mistakes', by making life fit into prescribed and preordained patterns, by ruling in the name of others, by organizing men along the lines of efficiency and order, by implementing these decisions through the aid of bureaucratic machines, the social technologist will increase the disparity between important human needs and their satisfaction, thereby increasing unhappiness. The fruits of social engineering may well be a sense of emptiness for those whose lives it was designed to enrich.

Technological politics, which rests on the belief that most problems in society are capable of objective solution and rational manipulation, however benign in origin, however genuinely and disinterestedly based on a desire to serve the interests of mankind, ultimately reflects a degraded view of human beings: it is implacably hostile to any belief in the reasonable character of most men, given half a chance, and its implementation would thwart the development of individuals as self-directing beings. It would place citizens in a position analogous to students in

a classroom where the teacher continually told them the right answer. As an antidote to this view, one might well invoke the Aristotelian conception that the good life is only possible in the polis, and at the same time recall that one of the ways that the polis can be destroyed is through an excessive unity which stems from having 'correct' solutions imposed on it by either philosophers or kings. In this view, it is only in interacting with others, arguing and persuading, determining one's own and one's society's direction, and correlatively, in making mistakes, in advocating muddled or unimaginative courses of action, in fighting and disagreeing, in daring and failing, that human life is worth living. Advocating the adoption of 'objectively correct' solutions to social problems is antithetical to this viewpoint.

There are many who would hold it to be a dismal prospect that the vast majority of a community would be manipulated according to the rules of a policy science which had allowed a social engineer to choose a course of action which was the 'best' for the functioning of that community and for the individual's in it. They would claim that these social engineers, like Captain Ahab, have methods that are sane, but a goal - a rationalized world - that is mad.*

Of course it is by no means obvious, and certainly not on the basis of the little I have said here, that this antagonistic view toward a technological politics is a sound or correct one; but then this is not the issue here. The issue is whether the adoption of technically determined solutions to political problems can be a morally neutral undertaking; with regard to this question, the fact that one might well

* These remarks against a technological politics ought to be read while keeping in mind those which I made in Chapter 4, where the case for such a technology was presented. These conceptions are incompatible because they reflect deeply different ways of looking at human life, happiness and satisfaction.

reject such solutions on moral and political grounds, i.e. because one disagrees with the assumptions about human existence implicit in them, demonstrates that the decision to adopt these solutions cannot be made without recourse to certain interests, purposes, and values. It is for this reason that such decisions cannot be 'objective' and 'impersonal', and that, therefore, a policy science is not possible. The kinds of questions a policy scientist would ask and not ask, the kinds of solutions he would accept as legitimate and worthwhile, and the kinds of assumptions that his approach implies about political organization and individual happiness, all of these have enormous consequence for the kinds of life the members of a society would lead under his jurisdiction. Since the kind of life everyone leads is what politics is all about, these factors, viewed within this policy context, become something more than merely scientific: they become political issues.

The proposals and advice offered by a policy scientist (even assuming what I have denied, that such a science could exist), would still be subject to the same sorts of arguments and critical examination to which any politician is now subject; in offering a view of society, a plan of social action, there can be no specialists immune from possible disagreement with the values their recommendations foster and presuppose.

8. Social Science as Politics

But while the sophists profess to teach statesmanship, it is practiced not by any of them, but by men in public life who would seem to do so by virtue of a certain skill and experience rather than of thought.... They (the sophists) say it is possible to select the best laws, as though judgment were not the greatest thing, as, for instance, in music....

Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics,
1180^b - 1181^a

One of the prime sources of inspiration for the work of the social scientists whom I described in Part I is the therapeutic effect they believe it will have on man's social affairs by drastically circumscribing the role which politics plays in social life. At first it was assumed that politics could be eliminated entirely, but gradually it came to be admitted that politics is necessary in order to solve the special sort of problems having to do with the ends or goals of social action, and that therefore a certain amount would have to be tolerated. Nevertheless, they still maintain that the social bodies of industrial civilization are diseased, infected by an excessive dose of politics which has both divided these societies and has prevented the development of rational solutions to many of the problems which disrupt them. They admit that some temperature in the social body is unavoidable, but too much political action has produced unnecessary tensions resulting in a social fever which has to be quelled if modern society is ever to be healthy. A profound distrust of politics, and an overwhelming desire to substitute something for it, was one motivating factor in the rise of social science; it continues to be a predominating influence on its current practitioners.

Beginning with Plato there has been a host of thinkers in history who have adopted this antagonistic view of politics. What is striking about the tradition of Part I, and what distinguishes it from others,

is its belief that science, as opposed to philosophy, religion, the Church, Tradition, or Business, can replace politics, or at least a good deal of it. Deeply impressed with the success of the methods of the natural sciences not only in providing man with a verifiable knowledge of the physical world, but particularly with their utility in arming him with techniques with which he can exploit Nature's wealth for his own benefit and control Her grosser threats to his security, they postulated that social science could and would do the same with respect to society. By adopting objective procedures of investigation, natural science had overthrown the quackery of theological and metaphysical conceptions of the world, and in so doing had permitted the engineer and the doctor to replace the priest, the charlatan, and the uninformed man of common sense as the leaders of men; now social science would dethrone political philosophy as the chief source of information about social affairs, and ultimately the policy scientist would oust the pedantic lawyers and ignorant politicians who had so misled and misgoverned all through man's history. Science, which in the guise of industrial technology is the source of so many of the social and economic problems of Western man, would ultimately provide its own solution to these problems. Objective answers established through the rational use of evidence and technique would replace opinion and rhetoric, and social life would thereby be transformed and redeemed.

Implicit in this belief that science can perform the tasks now ascribed to politics, at least in the majority of instances, is the tacit presumption that science provides the paradigm example of proper thinking, and that as long as anything is not treated in a scientific way, it is being treated in an imperfect way. It is this viewpoint which underlines the single most important element of the whole social engineering view of

politics, which is that there is such a thing as a correct way of proceeding in human affairs, and that it is the responsibility of the decision maker to discover what this way is. As in the building of a bridge or the repairing of an injured arm, so also in social affairs there is a right mode of operation which is inherent in the matter at hand and in the nature of the problem, a mode independent of the technologist's mere opinions or conjectures but which he must have knowledge of if he is to perform in the most efficient manner possible. Until now, the unreliable intuitions, unrigorous hunches, and muddled impressions of the politicians have almost invariably prevented man from finding this political truth, but the methods of science will ultimately overcome this adolescent manner of deciding how to behave. A policy science will be able to do clearly and accurately what politics has been fumblingly trying to accomplish all along; with its maturation, truth, transcending the petty squabbles and narrow, biased opinions of political man, will finally prevail as the means by which most authoritative decisions in society are made.

But it is at just this point that a basic weakness in the policy scientist's case reveals itself. For it is precisely this notion that there can be an objectively proper solution to a political issue that is fallacious, resting on a crucial misunderstanding of the role which politics plays in human affairs. The problems of politics, even the so-called technical ones, are not soluble by scientific procedure because they are not problems which have a definite answer, nor does their resolution have to do with discovering the truth. Indeed, it is misleading to speak of 'problems', 'solutions', and 'answers' when discussing politics because these terms deceptively suggest a similarity to mechanics or medicine. That this is the case, and that scientific technique will

always avoid contact with political issues, can be seen by examining what is involved in making a political judgment.

No community consists simply of harmonious relationships among its members. True, the existence of a society is inconceivable in the absence of a sense of belonging, shared values, and common rules on the part of its participants; but within this framework of cooperation and confraternity, there always exists conflicting ways of living, factious beliefs or practices, aspirations whose fulfillment would be incompatible with the satisfaction of the dreams and wishes of others. No society is immune from modes of conduct which antagonize certain members and provoke them to counteractive manoeuvres. Just because it is composed of discrete individuals who are joined together, a community is always a blend of contrary as well as mutual interests, of disagreement as well as agreement over what is desirable and how it ought to be attained, of both sympathetic and antagonistic demands. The existence of a community never eliminates conflict; rather it channels, mitigates, and contains it within certain limits. It is for this reason that argument, adjustment, dissent, and litigation are endemic features of human affairs.

These various conflicts are of different types depending on their particular character. But when the aims, plans, beliefs and claims of some members of the community conflict with those of the other members over the rules, institutions and leaders which govern them, or over the allocation of resources, or over the course of action which it is thought the community as a whole ought to adopt, then specifically political problems arise. As such, political issues are those which strike at the very root of a community's existence: involved are questions as to the shape and direction it ought to take, as to the mechanisms by which social conflicts are ameliorated, and as to the precise relationship of certain

groups with others. The nature of political problems is such that the concern of the politician must always be, if he is to do his job properly, at least partially with the community as a whole and its continued viability.

It is this function of dealing with disorder in terms of its effect on the pattern of ordered relationships called the political or civic community that is responsible for one of the distinguishing features of a political problem. For one ingredient in any political question which faces a ruler or a legislature is, how can we mitigate the clash between the members of the society in such a way that they are satisfied enough to remain active members of this community. Peculiarly political problems are possible only within the context of a community, and indeed relate to the nature of this community itself; it is for this reason that the politician must always consider the different requests, threats and proposals thrown at him at least partially in the light of the kind of cooperation needed to sustain the union which these differences threaten to destroy or drastically alter. 'Political logic' consists in large measure in knowing how to cope with the disturbances which arise out of social life which bear intimately on the nature and existence of this life. A great deal of it is concerned with how to defuse those collisions which promise to undermine the texture of reciprocity which is the basis of any social order, with equilibrating the various antagonistic elements, with moderating the differences between members so that they will continue to be members. In other words, one function of the politician is to hold the members of the society together in a reasonably harmonious way.

It is this function of political judgments, to insure the continued healthy existence of the community, together with the kinds of considera-

tions which it is necessary to include in political calculations in order to fulfill it, which distinguishes the solution of a political problem from that of a scientific one. For the politician cannot only be concerned to adopt the right, the most efficient, the just, the cheapest, or the most noble course of action* - courses which presumably those who desire to eliminate politics think can be determined on other, 'objective' grounds (although I have argued that this is false as well); he must be as much concerned with the felt needs and wants of the members of his constituency, with how they view one another, and with how they can be persuaded to accept a given course of action and continue active participation in the community. Factors relating to support for the community as a whole necessarily modify both the means and the ends which the politician may propose. In large measure, political judgments are judicial in character, attempting to achieve tentative equilibriums within^{the} context of ever recurring disagreement and debate.

The difference between political and scientific judgment can be clearly exemplified by recalling the concepts characteristically used to describe a political discussion and decision. Political discussions consist largely in sounding out the views or demands of the parties concerned, determining how strongly they are felt, ascertaining what concessions might be extracted, and mediating between the separate parties. This ultimately leads to some sort of arrangement which the parties agree to

* I underscore 'only' because I do not mean that considerations of justice, efficiency, etc. ought to be ignored in politics, nor that they are secondary, nor that one should not criticize politicians in terms of them.

It should also be noted that there is a distinction between deciding on the basis of the needs of the community and on the basis of one's personal self-interest. A politician may be ignoble or unjust because the continued existence of the community requires it, or because his own career demands it. I am discussing the former; I do not wish to appear as proposing or advocating a purely Machiavellian view of politics.

however begrudgingly, one which expresses a workable compromise among the various demands, A 'solution' to the problem is thereby reached, but it is a solution rooted in expediency, assent, and conciliation. As a solution it bears no resemblance to the solutions to scientific problems: scientists don't press their demands, nor split the difference, nor do they exhort, plead, bribe, threaten, mollify, negotiate with, strongarm, or bargain with one another. A scientific argument is not, as a political argument must be, an exercise in arbitration. All of the terms I have underlined are unavoidable when giving an account of political affairs* precisely because of what I have been arguing, namely, that one of the primary purposes of politics is to discover the course which the members of the society will accept. To demand that politics change its character and become scientific is to completely misunderstand the function of politics in social life and the consequent terms under which its arguments and judgments must be carried out.

A political authority must settle the differences among the members of his community in order that they may get on with their lives with at least a modicum of harmony and cooperation, and also in order that their sense of belonging will be maintained both so that future disputes may thereby be settled and so that the community - a good in itself - will be continued. It is thus that the decision-maker must incorporate the 'opinions' of the relevant members, no matter how inane or inopportune or unscientific they may be, into his deliberations about what is to be done, and he must judge how adamantly they are held and how significantly

* Even a dictator who makes autocratic decisions must operate in the same general manner. The same may also be said of revolutionary groups dedicated to a single ideological stance (although it is precisely their inability at politics that makes such groups so unstable and faction-prone).

they affect the actions of the members. The prime issue in these deliberations is not about the truth or falsity of these opinions, nor whether they are irrational or promote inefficiency or are misguided; rather, it revolves around the special kind of rationality required by an endeavour in which one must take into account the emotions and beliefs of the entire community and fashion them into a workable partnership. Solving political problems is not a matter of rationally appealing to a general principle, of deducing the most efficient course from standard paradigms, of disproving the beliefs of one's opponents, of empirically demonstrating the foolishness of certain demands, or of calculating monetary costs and benefits; it is a matter of getting people to live together. Politics is not about proof in the scientific sense; it is about understanding what people want and claim they want, about what they may be expected and persuaded to do, about what sort of arrangements are required in order to maintain peace between them and still achieve some element of justice and purpose and perhaps even charity in their lives.*

It is for these reasons that the logic and methods of science are inappropriate replacements for the concrete pragmatism of political activity. To propose such a thing, and to advocate it as a means by which to redeem human life, is to betray a deep and fatal misreading of the nature of social affairs.

This mistaken belief that politics can be replaced by science, at least with respect to those questions of the best means to a given end,

* Again I must emphasize that I am not claiming that social science is not useful in aiding the politician in deciding which policy to pursue; rather, I am arguing that the nature of political problems is such that this decision can never be itself a scientific decision analogous to the decisions of a doctor or engineer.

is not of mere academic interest, a theory confined to the world of philosophy and isolated from any contact with the way in which we all lead our lives. For this belief can have, and in some cases demonstrably has had, profound impact on both the theory and practice of contemporary politics. This may be witnessed in a number of instances.

The belief in a 'scientific political decision' may actually diminish the range of alternatives in political life by banishing or discrediting insights which have been reached by methods other than those which resemble science, and by deriding ideas whose worth cannot be determined according to scientific criteria. If men think that scientific technocrats can objectively determine the best course of action, they will naturally be predisposed to ignore the advice of non-technocrats as 'mere opinion', 'rhetoric', or 'romantic drivel'. In a scientific age it becomes a customary inclination to automatically accept the advice of so-called policy scientists and to instinctively ignore that proffered by their non-scientific competitors.

There is another tendency here which is even more dangerous and closed minded. This is the practice of refusing to recognize the sense or worth of questions which cannot be answered by employing the technical procedures of science. The capability of being quantified becomes a prerequisite of a valid inquiry, and all questions which are not amenable to quantification are spurned as meaningless. Gradually, as the scientific ethos permeates the political world, it no longer becomes necessary to deny the worth of non-measurable questions: they are repressed from consciousness and are not even broached. The result of this process can only be a de-humanization which results from treating men only in those aspects of their life which can be translated into numerical characteristics, and from denying importance to those idiosyncratic, local

personal and concrete features which distinguish one man from another. Men are treated in the abstract, in terms of 'objective' categories of empirical observation and mathematical calculation; this depersonalization has profound impact on the kinds of policies thought proper or permissible.

Not only are men treated as though they were things rather than as rational beings by this refusal to recognize certain kinds of questions, but it also has the effect of drastically limiting the range of the possible social and political worlds men might live in. For fundamental questions about the whole direction of political policy, its assumptions, the values it fosters and assumes; debates about the ends of life, political principle and ideal; imaginative efforts to picture alternative worlds, other life styles - all of these become a priori dismissed as metaphysics, speculation, wish-fulfilment dreams, or 'mere expressions of preference', i.e. matters undebatable in a rational manner and therefore not worthy of consideration. Political inquiry and discussion is levelled out, restricted to technical questions of finding the most efficient means of achieving a goal of policy; analyses antagonistic both to the style and the substance of the policy scientists are ignored, omitted from serious consideration.

But such a situation not only negatively limits the options of man by refusing to seriously consider the critiques and dreams of non-scientists, but it does so in a much more active and positive way as well. For by simply accepting the end of policy 'as given' and as not 'rationally' i.e. not scientifically, decidable, and by directing all the attention to questions of means to these ends, the belief in a policy science unwittingly acts to bolster up the contemporary status quo. As Weber clearly perceived, social science has arisen only in the context of a

certain kind of society, namely, industrial society, one which is itself based on the same values and assumptions as those which lie at the basis of the belief in a policy science. This belief has gained a foothold only within a particular socio-economic structure, and because it specifically restricts questions to those about means, it thereby acts as a support for this structure. It is thus no accident that the 'end of ideology' solgans of the 1950's, those shallow pronouncements of the death of political philosophy because the fundamental problems of society had been solved and what remained were technical questions best left to experts, were propounded mainly by political scientists and sociologists who had unhesitatingly accepted the values and assumptions of the industrial society in which they lived.* The belief in a policy science

* For the view that the 'death' of political philosophy is the result of a consensus among the intellectuals as to the major arrangements and objectives of industrial society (and therefore is the result not of the end of ideology but agreement on one ideology) cf., P.H. Partridge, "Politics, Philosophy, Ideology", Political Studies, Vol. 9, 1961, pp. 217-235 (reprinted in A. Quinton, Political Philosophy (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1967)). In this article Partridge writes:

Is there not all but universal acceptance of the belief that continuous technological and economic innovation, uninterrupted expansion of economic resources, a continuously rising standard of living of 'material welfare', are the main purposes of social life and political action, and also the main criteria for judging the success and validity of a social order?...these are the objectives and criteria which define the course of contemporary democratic politics. They are 'built-in' criteria which render irrelevant and impotent any alternative social policy. (Quinton, p. 39).

Of course the key moment for this kind of thinking was the conference of internationally renowned social scientists and theorists on the 'Future of Freedom' held in Milan, September 1955, and the report of this conference by Edward Shils entitled "The End of Ideology?", Encounter, 5 November, 1955, pp. 52-58. In this report Shils wrote: "The first sessions dealt with the growing hollowness of the conventional distinction between socialism and capitalism...(the conference was led to) examine the extent to which the Soviet economic system, simply by being a large scale industrial system, was forced to meet the same conditions and to face the same problems as the capitalist countries of the West." (Ibid., p. 54). It was pointed out that "the underpinning of the great ideological conflicts of the first part of this century had largely been pulled out," and that, in fact, our age had been freed from the intellectual tyranny of ideology and thereby enabled to clearheadedly face the truly difficult and real problems of the day, which are technical. Shils' account was later

(Contd.)

actively circumscribes the range of what may be asked and what may not, and by doing so it acts as a conservative force, stifling the kind of assessment this century so desperately needs, a critical analysis of the basis of industrial society.

Indeed, it is also no accident that in the so-called technological social scientists societies/are hired today much as preachers or as lawyers used to be in less enlightened times, in order to establish the soundness of government policy; for in this kind of society the equivalent of virtue, theological soundness, and legality is some demonstration of quantifiable gain over quantifiable loss. The belief in a policy science not only serves to legitimize this process of recruiting social scientists into governments; it also acts to cover up what is involved in employing them to make policy. For what is actually occurring in this process is not that the 'truth-bearers' are finally emerging into the political arena in order to rationalize the social order according to objectively determined rules, but

(Contd.) endorsed by Seymour Martin Lipset in his Political Man (Mercury Books, London, 1963), chap. xiii, "The End of Ideology?"; here he agrees with Shils' and von Hayek's assessment (in a paper read at the conference) that there was "general agreement among the delegates, regardless of political belief, that traditional issues separating the left and the right had declined to comparative insignificance." (*ibid.*, p. 404). The reason for this is clear to this leading political scientist: "This change in Western political life reflects the fact that fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved...this very triumph of the democratic social revolution in the West ends domestic politics for those intellectuals who must have ideologies or utopias to motivate them to political action." (*ibid.*, p. 406). He also says this about politics in the new age: "The democratic class struggle will continue, but it will be a fight without ideologies, without red flag, without May Day parades. This naturally upsets many intellectuals who can participate only as ideologists or major critics of the status quo," (*ibid.*, p. 408).

For other social scientists of the same general view, especially on the relationship of social science to modern industrial society, cf., J.K. Galbraith, The New Industrial State (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1967); Gunnar Myrdal, Beyond the Welfare State (Duckworth, London, 1960); Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology (Free Press, Glencoe, 1960); Raymond Aron, 18 Lectures on Industrial Society (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1967).

rather the promotion of the interests of the new technical, scientific, managerial, and industrial elites who are members of, and who control, the institutions which monopolize and profit from advanced technology. The notion of a policy science is an ideological weapon which serves as the intellectual and 'objective' basis for the machinations and decisions of certain groups which find in the rule of technology the most likely guarantee of their power, status, and wealth, as well as the best means of putting into practice their own conceptions of what is good for man. As with all ideologies, this doctrine explicitly claims that it is not an ideology; but just as with the doctrine of laissez-faire in the 19th century, so with the doctrine of a policy science in the 20th: both are the intellectual and cultural expression of the interests, assumptions, and desires of a certain group in society covered with the protective gloss of 'scientific rationality.'

This gloss serves not only to legitimize the process of employing so-called policy scientists; it also serves as means of insulation for those who have become decision makers. By masking their essentially political decisions based on essentially value-laden studies in the rhetoric of science, and by appealing to their social scientific credentials, policy scientists give to their decisions the quality of rationality, objectivity, and correctness which those of a doctor or an engineer possess. Their political acts become enclosed behind a shield which spares them from the moral and political criticism of mere common men who have neither the training, intelligence, nor skill to question these acts in the 'appropriate' manner, i.e. by using 'scientific' techniques themselves.

Lastly, the doctrine of a policy science can also serve as a self-justifying rationale for the experts of government, those who are capable

of making decisions on an 'objectively determined' basis, and whose thoughts are uncontaminated by the values, hopes, desires and dreams which disqualify the proposals of mere politicians and ordinary folk. This doctrine may well convince a policy scientist of the rectitude and truth of his own policies, that most dangerous egotism which is often at the root of dictatorial regimes.

Rooted in a deepseated hatred of political affairs, the notion of a policy science enters social life as the weapon of one side in a profoundly political war over the nature, shape, and direction of modern industrial society. This should not be surprising in light of what I have been arguing; for politics cannot be replaced by science, and when the notion that it can enters the political arena it thereby automatically assumes a political character. The doctrine of a policy science is not only a misguided intellectual theory; by its very nature of attempting to provide the basis for a radical re-structuring of the way in which men live together, it is necessarily a political doctrine. What began as an attempt to eliminate politics ends by reaffirming the necessity of politics.

In this thesis I have been at pains to demonstrate that there is no special science, a 'policy science', which will redeem man's social life and thereby effect his entrance into a golden era of human history. Moreover, I have claimed that this is not a contingent matter of fact either, but that such a notion is logically misconceived. It is based on mistaken conceptions about the nature of the social science which it was thought would serve as its foundation, about what is involved in determining technical solutions to political problems, and ultimately about the role which politics must play in social life. These mistaken conceptions lie at the bottom of a great deal of contemporary thought, and they

obscure a great deal of what is happening in contemporary political affairs: to expose these misconceptions and obscurities, and thereby to cast light on these contemporary phenomena, has been one of my objects. But by exposing them as logical fallacies I have also wished to destroy the hope that any such policy science might emerge in the future, a possibility that all intelligent men ought to endeavour to actualize and all good men ought to pray for. I have hoped to show that social science can never be man's salvation, and in so doing have hoped to permanently undermine what I have been calling the technological view of man's social affairs and his political problems.

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