

you press them about their objective in this life, the answer is: "To die in the state of grace, to avoid mortal sin," not to be transformed into Christ, to say with St. Paul: "I live now, not I but Christ lives in me." In both cases the preoccupation is not with the attaining of a perfection which is not had, but with the mere preservation of what is already possessed. As it reflects a spiritual disposition, I do not think it matters much whether the thing possessed be the demonstration of God's existence, or the state of grace. And in both cases the effect is the same: Those that have not, what they have shall be taken away.

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Problem (b): Finality and the Social Sciences

A hundred years ago almost any college in the United States had a definite ordering of politics and economics to philosophy. From the time of the foundation of our country to the Civil War, this order was quite evident in both private and public institutions of learning. Moral philosophy, understood more or less in the aristotelian sense of the term, was usually a required course in non-Catholic as well as Catholic colleges. Likewise, courses of study in law schools presupposed natural law and the other truths of moral philosophy. In short, there was, only a hundred years ago, an accepted and well-defined relation and order of such studies to philosophy.

Between the end of the Civil War and up through the beginning of the present century, the secularistic and positivistic tradition arose and became established in American education, especially in the field of what we now call the social sciences.¹ Shortly after the Civil War, the standard texts in moral philosophy began to be discarded. Between 1865 and 1900, political science became separated from philosophy and autonomous. The emphasis in political science shifted from courses based on moral philosophy to history, and especially to constitutional history. This, in turn, shifted to descriptive studies of practical politics, elections, political corruption, administration, and local government. Each of these matters in turn tended to become departments within political science. In imitation of the physical sciences, the method used was empirical and descriptive; anything related to ethics and philosophy was considered "subjective" and "unscientific."

This situation was paralleled in the field of economics. By the end of the last century, less and less attention was paid to political economy and more and more to matters of private interest. It was the period during which departments of economics were developing into Schools of Business

¹ This transition has been well summarized in an article by Mr. Ben W. Palmer entitled "The Natural Law and Pragmatism," which appeared in the *Notre Dame Lawyer* for March, 1948. The opening paragraphs of this paper are based on that article.

Administration. The emphasis became centered on a "mythical economic man" whose sole motivation was the pursuit of profit in complete isolation from obligation to others or to society, and without regard to moral principle.

As Mr. Palmer notes, in a final summary, "Thus the whole sweep of thought in political science, economics, anthropology, history, psychology and in legal education during the last one hundred years was in the direction of relativism, positivism, empiricism, concentration on concrete measurable facts and the analysis of narrowly circumscribed situations by specialists using their own highly specialized techniques."²

Such is the fact of the transition of the past hundred years and such, more or less, is the situation today throughout the field of the social sciences. How are we to regard it? How are we to evaluate it? Social scientists generally view it as progress and as advance in knowledge. And certainly there has been extensive research resulting in knowledge both new and necessary. Nevertheless, it is becoming more and more apparent that this has been achieved at the cost of sacrificing true wisdom, not only in the sense that these sciences are no longer in any hierarchical order, but also in the practical sense, in that much of our newly-acquired information is leading to disaster. The ultimate judgment of philosophy on this development in social science depends upon determining whether there is an ordering of social science to philosophy, and to theology as well.

The question of the relation, therefore, of the social sciences to philosophy is of both speculative and practical importance: speculative, as it concerns the nature of science and a hierarchy of science; practical, as it concerns the effect the social sciences have on human life and action. Our primary task here is the speculative one, although we shall refer somewhat to the practical problem as well.

The first point concerns the status of the social sciences in the field of knowledge. The social scientists themselves are not always in agreement about the status of their science. Nevertheless, we must consult them insofar as they are the immediate authorities. As a summary presentation, I shall refer to an official source, the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. I shall quote here from the introductory article of the first volume, which discusses the question of what the social sciences are. The social sciences are there defined in the following terms.

The phenomena related to group activities are commonly called social phenomena, and the sciences which classify and interpret such activities are the social sciences. The social sciences may thus be defined as those mental or cultural sciences which deal with the activities of the individual as a member of the group.³

The article lists as the four earliest social sciences politics, economics, history, and jurisprudence, tracing their origin to the Greeks. Among newer social sciences are listed anthropology, penology, and sociology.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1930, Vol. I, page 3.

Since sociology has assumed a certain dominance in the field of social science, the remarks of the article concerning it are of particular significance.

Sociology, the next of the newer sciences, is only three-quarters of a century old, and has scarcely come of age even today. It is the most ambitious of all the social sciences because in a sense the most comprehensive. As its very name signifies, it is an endeavor to lay bare the foundations of all living together, to elucidate the laws which lie at the basis of social intercourse. Far deeper than the economic or the legal or the political relations are those which govern human association in general. Sociology is thus the social science *par excellence*. It is also the most difficult of the cultural sciences. If it is not easy correctly to appraise one's self, how much more arduous is it to know one's neighbor or to evaluate one's own reactions to him. It is no wonder that sociology is still far from the definiteness and unity that characterize the older social sciences. Nor is it surprising that broad generalizations lacking adequate verification still hold an important place in sociological theory. Nevertheless sociology remains the most important of human sciences. Only when real progress has been made in the elucidation of its laws, can we hope to attain a comprehension of life itself with its countless facets.⁴

The article continues on to list "semi-social sciences" as distinct from purely social sciences. Under this classification we find ethics listed. The article stresses the notion that individual morality is being increasingly recognized as resulting from social forces, maintaining that "without the group, there would have been no conception of right or wrong."⁵

Finally, the article discusses a group of sciences which have acquired a social content, although they had an independent origin. We are interested in this group to the extent that philosophy is listed in it.

Philosophy, in a certain sense the forerunner of science, was long considered as something entirely independent. When we deal with the final interpretation of life, of thought and of conduct, which we call philosophy, we seem to be treading on ground unbroken by science. But in proportion as parts of the unknown are converted into the known, new sciences are detached from the all-embracing philosophy and pursue a life of their own. It was in this way that chemistry and physics arose out of the medieval natural philosophy, and that politics and economics were separated from moral philosophy.⁶

As far as this article is concerned, the definition and divisions of social science given in it are broad enough—in reality, vague enough—to include everything except the purely physical experimental sciences. Such a notion of social science can be advanced only by avoiding any precision of the term "science" and by ignoring any distinction between speculative and practical knowledge. It therefore tells us little about the proper status of social science in the field of knowledge.

As a matter of fact, and apart from this treatment in the Encyclopedia, it is difficult to get a clear notion of social science even when it is restricted

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

to the most commonly accepted social sciences of history, political science, economics, and sociology. For history, formally considered, is a *narratio* of singulars which becomes scientific only to the extent it enters the formality of whatever it is a history of; for example, as it is a history of politics or a history of philosophy, and so on. Political science, as we shall see, is a kind of extension of political philosophy. Economics basically is the art of acquiring wealth—the *ars pecuniativae* which Aristotle refers to at the end of Book I of the *Politics*. Sociology, despite the many conflicting views about it, seems to be subordinate to political science insofar as it is a developed method of gathering the facts of political or social experience as ordered to the establishment of the political or social common good. Thus the term “social science” already is ambiguous when restricted to just these four. It would be clearer to treat such subject matter separately. However, I shall retain the popular use of the term “social science”, although I shall mean by it primarily sociology and political science.

Further, as far as the article in the Encyclopedia is concerned, there not only is no relation of the social sciences to philosophy but, rather, philosophy itself is subsumed under the broad notion of social science. In fact, philosophy is conceived as a vague origin of knowledge; it seems to be related to (modern) science as the unknown to the known. If philosophy has any value, it appears to be only to the extent it acquires a “social content.” We cannot, therefore, look to this official view for the establishment of any real relation of the social sciences to philosophy although, as we shall see, some clues are given.

In beginning a philosophical examination of the matter, we start with the traditional definition of science as certain knowledge through causes, with all the strict conditions this definition imposes. The rigor of this definition limits the extent of strict science to knowledge that is speculative. The social sciences, however, classify as formally practical sciences, and in practical knowledge we depart from the universality and necessity characteristic of the speculative order.

Moral philosophy itself which, like the social sciences, is formally practical knowledge, soon leaves the level of universal principles and conclusions. The proportion of truly scientific knowledge in moral philosophy is small in relation to the whole of moral philosophy. Both Aristotle and St. Thomas make this clear in various places in the treatise on the *Ethics*.⁷ It remains true, of course, that the most basic or common principles of the moral order are immutable and absolute, but nevertheless a variability and uncertainty appears even in some of the conclusions following upon the basic principles.

This is because moral philosophy necessarily has an intimate relation with contingency and singularity, and to the extent the moral philosopher advances into the realm of singulars as such the less likelihood is there of his being able to extract a true universal. The deeper the investigation

⁷ Cf. St. Thomas, *Com. in Ethic.*, Book I, Lect. 3; Book II, Lect. 2. *Vd. Sum. Th.*, I-II, Q. 94, Art. 4.

into the realm of concrete singulars the greater is the multiplicity of elements which he must consider such that the final judgment of singulars belongs to the prudence of the individual. Moral philosophy itself is concerned only with knowing how an operation should be carried on without actually carrying it on, and this is why formally practical knowledge is still distinct from the completely practical knowledge of prudence. Yet the moral philosopher must always remain in contact with the order of concrete existence, which involves an inevitable relativity in his knowledge.⁸

The social sciences are even more concerned with the concrete order of singular existence and activity than moral philosophy, so much so that there are no proper universal principles which distinctively belong to what we call the social sciences, nor are there any strict demonstrations. This is evident from the task to which the social sciences are committed, which is the investigation and research of "social actions" which, in their multiplicity, defy truly universal generalizations. It is this situation which has led many to reject the traditional definition of science and to regard the social sciences either as sciences in a new meaning of the term or as sciences which have become separated and independent from philosophy.

On the contrary, however, the fact that the social sciences are not strict sciences only emphasizes a relation of dependence they have to moral philosophy insofar as moral philosophy radically contains the basic principles of the practical order. Consequently, on the one hand, the social sciences depend upon moral philosophy for the primary universal principles and conclusions of the practical order and, on the other hand, they add a perfection to moral philosophy in that they seek to realize a knowledge of singular human acts as far as possible. The social sciences, therefore, are a kind of continuation of moral philosophy. They are, in a certain way, a dialectical extension of moral philosophy analogous to the way in which the modern physical experimental sciences are a dialectical extension of philosophy of nature. We see the truth of this indicated in the article from the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* as it drew a parallel between the social sciences and moral philosophy, and the physical sciences and natural philosophy. For they are both dialectical extensions of philosophy in the sense that since, of necessity, they must depart from the rigor of true science by their research into singular multiplicity, they must have recourse to hypothesis, experimental investigation, and theory in order to render intelligible their subject matter.

Insofar, then, as the social sciences are an extension of moral philosophy, the social sciences not only have a definite relation to moral philosophy but in fact are to be classified as moral sciences. Yet it is precisely this position which many social scientists deny. Mr. Palmer, in his article, cites several representative positions of this view: "It is no more the function of the political scientist to evaluate the good or bad consequences of particular techniques than it is the function of the chemist, qua chemist,

⁸ Cr. Mullahy, Bernard I., C.S.C., "Practical Knowledge and Relativity", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Vol. XXII, 1947, pp. 151-166.

to pass ethical judgments upon the use which other men make of chemical knowledge and skill." Another maintains: "It is not the function of the scientist to judge between 'good' and 'evil' in his research operations. It is not up to him to say that political corruption is either good or bad." And finally: "It is certainly not appropriate in the class-room, particularly at the college level, to discuss political ideologies in terms of 'better and worse.'"

The underlying argument of such statements as these seems to be that the experimental character of social science justifies an "objectivity" so complete that the social scientist can prescind from any moral notions or considerations. Such positions suppose a radical opposition between experimental knowledge and moral knowledge. They insinuate a complete identification between physical experimental science and social experimental science.

But, granting the experimental character of social science, this does not prove it has nothing to do with moral science. For the social sciences, as has been indicated, fall within the domain of practical knowledge by reason of their object. Now, within the domain of practical knowledge, there is only the division of moral science and art. Experimental knowledge as such is found within both divisions of practical knowledge and therefore is not in opposition to moral science.

Further, it is a dangerous error to suppose that the social sciences can be developed without any moral implications or philosophical presuppositions. It is precisely such a position that has led to the frightful political and social disasters which are threatening our civilization today. And such a position is completely unrealistic and unsound insofar as it fails to realize that the social sciences, from the nature of the case, must be concerned with human actions which, as human, cannot fall outside a moral ordering. In fact, it is just this which is the point of difference between the physical sciences and the social sciences, and which is not sufficiently appreciated by some social scientists. In this respect, the parallel drawn between the extension of the physical sciences from philosophy of nature and the extension of the social sciences from moral philosophy can be very misleading. This parallel does not mean that each attains the same kind of knowledge. The termination of the physical sciences is in art while the termination of the social sciences is in prudence. Those social scientists, then, who deny a moral ordering in the social sciences have confused art and prudence, and it is this which leads them to identify the method of the social sciences with that of the physical sciences.

Furthermore, if we examine any of the standard works in political science or sociology we find, without exception, certain moral presuppositions (whether true or false) which function as principles by which "social facts" are gathered, related, and formed to establish social theories. The very approach to an investigation of social phenomena must be in the light of a moral position at least implicitly assumed by the social scientist. As instances of this, consider any sociological theory on marriage, population, wealth distribution, race, and sex.

It follows, therefore, that the social sciences are related to moral philosophy in terms of the basic principles and common conclusions of the practical order, which moral philosophy establishes. This involves such notions as the true common good, moral good and evil, the role of virtue in human life, and so on. This relation, which is on the part of the object, is one of dependence. The social sciences are also related mediately to the order of prudential execution by which the common good is realized. And in this respect we see the perfection which the social sciences add to moral philosophy insofar as they seek the concrete realization of the general principles of moral philosophy and the actualization of the good social order.

This entails further consequences, which can be seen by taking sociology specifically. Since modern sociology claims its end is human progress, and since human progress is ordered by law, then sociologists make themselves a kind of deliberative consultant to the law-giver. To exercise such a deliberative role, however, presupposes the right intention of the right end. This end, for a rational creature as such, is a life of virtue, both natural and supernatural. We thus see that the social sciences generally, and sociology especially, are also a kind of prolongation of moral theology. Hence, on the part of the end, that is, operation, the social sciences terminate in natural and supernatural regnative prudence. From the standpoint of object, the social sciences look back to moral philosophy and through moral philosophy to moral theology.

Consequently, from the standpoint of object, to have the social sciences in their *integrity*, not only moral philosophy, but moral theology is necessary, and moral theology is impossible without its principles, the data of revelation, and the data of revelation cannot be principles without supernatural belief. From the standpoint of end, the supernatural end cannot be intended without charity and charity cannot be had without the state of grace.

This, in turn, underlies the need of mutual relationship between the social scientist, the moral philosopher, and both together with the moral theologian. The question of finality and the social sciences, therefore, resolves into showing the dependence the social sciences must have on both moral philosophy and moral theology. This implies the fruitful re-establishment of the hierarchy of science, which has been almost completely lost in modern education with its tendency toward unrelated departmentalization and its flattening out of the curriculum in terms of a purely quantitative credit system.

The question of finality and the social sciences is also an urgently practical matter because of the widespread contemporary influence of the social sciences and the consequences which follow in the social order. To take sociology again as an example, the contemporary sociologist proposes measures to alleviate social evils which inevitably arise within the state. Such efforts, of course, are commendable. Yet, in seeking to solve such problems, the completely secular sociologist, wittingly or unwittingly, is destroying the moral life of the citizens and especially of the faithful by advocating euthanasia, artificial birth control, artificial insemination, and

so on. In fact, much of contemporary sociology is in effect a radical secularization and therefore a disordering of supernatural truth and charity. And it is this rejection of supernatural truth which is the cause of the moral perversion in the natural order. For secular sociology, indisposed to will the true common good, and therefore radically imprudent, will issue Kinsey reports, kill off the unfit, enslave the poor under the guise of material security, and choke off the generation of new members of the Mystical Body.

These are the "social facts" which Catholic theologians, philosophers, and social scientists are confronted with today. Merely deploring these social disorders, however, is not a sufficient answer. It is the positive presentation of sound doctrine and the integral life as Catholics that is demanded. For the good of sociology, as well as for the health of the Mystical Body, the Catholic sociologist has a tremendous obligation to reverse the trend of secular sociology. Necessarily, this role will require him to make use of theological and philosophical truths. This, in turn, will require Catholic theologians and moral philosophers to guide the social scientist in ordering social knowledge to the Faith.

The facts of social life today force us to savor the truth of St. Thomas' statement that all knowledge which does not lead to God is perverse. This is a very concrete way of speaking of theology as the ordering principle of knowledge. This is a very forceful reminder to us to put our knowledge in order. For only in this way will all knowing terminate in the Divine Verum. Only in this way will all doing terminate in the Divine Bonum.

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ETHICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIETY DIVISION: Panel: ALFRED F. HERRIGAN, THOMAS E. DAVITT, BERNARD MULLAHEY.

Problem (a): The Common Good and the Principle of Finality

Omne agens agit propter finem: every agent acts for an end.¹ Such is the true formula of the principle of finality. As it is well known, this principle is to be understood analogically, according to the different natures of the agents to which it applies. Using the technical vocabulary of Thomism, we say that intellectual and rational agents act for an end *directive formaliter*, purely animal agents *directive materialiter*, vegetative and purely corporeal agents *executive tantum*.²

Saint Thomas shows the immediate dependence upon the principle of finality of a second principle, which he formulates: every agent acts for

¹ *Omne igitur agens agit propter finem. Cont. Gent.*, lib. III, c. 2.

² *Le Réalisme du Principe de Finalité*, by P. Reg. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., pp. 105-108. This work still remains the best introduction to the problem of finality.