

Part one

• What are Sociological Concepts¹

Often students are lost in their sociological studies right from the start. I am not only referring to those students who simply choose to stick with sociological units to "fill up" their course requirements even though they feel totally confused by the subject and/or the alienating experience of McAcademy - often such students are large in number. I am referring to those students who choose to take Sociology as a major.

Very often sociological reflection is discussed as if the **noun** (sociology, theory) has priority over the **verb** (research, theorising). Sociological thought, in this way of thinking about it, is what is contained in the books (text-books) on the subject. **Theory** is therefore the ideal form of the subject. It is the problematic for sociology. Meanwhile **theorising** is simply the various humble human attempts to attain this ideal. If this is so, is it any wonder that students come to view sociology's re-presentation of society in static terms? Moreover, the humble student (by that I mean the student critical of her own conceptual constructions) will have an exceedingly hard time of it if she doubts **Theory (n.)!**

But theory is not a commodity in the way that our use of language often leads us to wrongly conceive it. By transposing all the knotty questions into problems which derive from its uncritical use as a noun - eg what is the definition of this thing called theory? - we are in danger of developing our sociological insight in terms of a confused **linguistic** problematic. Surely theory can itself be analysed, and in so far as this is so it can be treated as a "thing"; yet it is a "thing" like other human acts are things - it is not a thing like a potato or a flower, a dog or a rock. It is a thinking "thing".

Deeper insight can be afforded, if, from the outset, we structure these theory-options **within a framework of alternative metaphors or analogies**. The student under the current scheme of theory-options sees herself as a somewhat helpless consumer who has to take a risk in the psycho-historical market place of sociological ideas. The curriculum seems to

¹ I am making this essay available to any who would like to read it. It is based upon an introductory piece I gave in the courses I taught, based upon my experience as a student of sociology. I have taught for more than 17 years

assume that the predominant rules are simply too big and too mysterious, intellectually speaking, for her to make any real choice. Somehow the resultant "theory" which she accepts has to be a mix between her own subjective perception and the objective function of the "hidden hand" of the sociological or ideological market-place. The truly human character of her choice is taken away from her. This is why I say that a focus upon possible metaphors which re-present society in their image might lead students to a better insight into what they do when they "pick a theory".

When we consider the totality of society and we analyse it from the standpoint of one or other aspect we are confronted **in our theorising** with the phenomenon of analogical and metaphorical re-presentation of social action. This is, as a matter of fact, integral to the complex task of scientific reflection. In sociological analysis our theories will also involve us in using one social setting to try and gain insight into other structured settings.

Comparison and contrast between social settings is integral to social theory and sociological research. From this our sociological metaphors arise. The number of possible metaphors is endless as are the possibilities which derive from mixed metaphors. But mixing metaphors is not merely an anti-systematic, eclectic approach. It may be the result of a more disciplined and scientific approach to social research.

Some of these basic metaphors have had a long and enduring currency within the discipline of sociology. They can be approached "as if" :

- it is a field of battle; the focus is upon the strategy of the captains of the troops; what are the two (or three or more) major contending sides? Who is fighting whom for what? What are the sub-battles within the various camps?
- it is a market place; a domain where interests and possessions are exchanged; products made, bought and sold; producers organised and capital invested.
- it is a stage or a novel with a developed plot with themes, characterisation, roles, scripts and individual variations.
- it is the playing out of a time-honoured ritual, communicating some symbolic idea from one sector of professionals to the non-professionals.
- it is a biological organism with organs (structures) joined by processes and sub-systems; it could be viewed as a womb in which the future is born out of the past.

- it is a gas bottle or a machine where energy/power is conserved and utilised in a fixed mechanical way according to a mechanical plan for the integration of the various component parts into the mechanical whole.
- it is a language; a court-room, place for judgement; a place of worship; a sporting venue or a game.

It is not possible to reduce the various theoretical schools to certain basic metaphors - but a consideration of how basic metaphors can be used to gain insight into the way human society is shaped will give students a basis from which to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the various sociological schools of thought. By reference to these metaphors we can also gain a line from which the critical and self-critical character of the various theories can be judged in relation to each other. Those that openly face the metaphoric character of their leading analogies are in fact more critically aware than those analyses which simply replace the multi-variegated reality with their own metaphor and hence adopt various kinds of reductionism. As the literature which emanates from the various traditions of sociological thought is read, various metaphorical allusions will appear and recede.

But then it is also possible to start with the metaphors and develop insight into the strengths and limitations of each in the resultant account of human society in all of its aspects, in all of its institutions, organisations and relationships. Then the teaching of sociology can begin to encourage the development of the student's own overview - not rejecting the theoretical tradition, nor the genuine analogical insights that the various sociological traditions bequeath to us.

So we can say that there are certainly more theoretical issues which have to be explored in social theory. Some of these issues are : the relation of metaphor and analogy to theory; the place of world-view in science; the ongoing construal of the relation of facts and values; a theoretic account which will explain the nature and character of objectivity and subjectivity in relation to the objects of theoretical analysis and the laws to which they are subject; the character of ideology and the structure of secularisation. We have perused the sociological encyclopaedia by invoking the theoretical attitude, by reference to the methods of social scientific research. We also anticipate an alternative view of the manner in which sociology is taught.

We now re-enter the social realm and begin the exhaustive work of sociological analysis in its empirical sense, developing an understanding of the formative power for good and ill of human responsibility. Scientific analysis shares in this.

We have laid down some of the major concepts and shown how they relate to each other. But sociology cannot be understood on its own. As a discipline it is an amalgam; it needs to be continually "fed" by concepts, analysis and data from specialists in history, geography, political science, economics, aesthetics as well as the focused study of manners, customs and socialisation. It requires ongoing philosophical self-criticism. It presupposes a studied view of the human body and a theoretical understanding of our psyché.

One's religion cannot be divorced from one's scholarship. There are indications that some streams of sociological thinking, either because of, or in reaction to, what is often called "post-modernism", have become more aware of their religious complacency in scientific reflection. With this in mind let me list some of the facets which such sociological thinking will have to nurture :

- a. Sociological thinking has to conceptualise its own view of authority and power in all social relationships, organisations and institutions. Such a view will have to account for the variety of authorities or power-responsibilities in society. The State and Church are but two (important) societal institutions which can only maintain their own integrity as they inter-dependently reckon with the authority and power of all the other distinct societal structures.
- b. Sociological thinking also involves an analytic classification of all the empirically evident societal structures of "every day life". This is not limited to "western countries", but focuses upon particular transformations that occur historically, globally and locally. The conceptual comparison and contrast between and among places and times is developed. Sociological research is inherently comparative.
- c. Sociological thinking involves an understanding of history and the processes of differentiation and disclosure in socio-cultural development. The focus is global and requires deepened insight into the power of tradition as the power of innovation also is brought into view.

- d. Sociological thinking will involve an ongoing account of how sociological research is itself possible.
- e. Sociological thinking involves an explanation of the value of social research, the meaning-structure of social facts and the prevailing spiritual dynamic of extant cultural forms.
- f. Sociological thinking also sharpens insight about the way scientific labour is divided.
- g. Sociological thinking deepens our appreciation for theoretical and conceptual thinking and thereby encourages our philosophic awareness. Social theory and research can enhance self-critical social participation.

Who can master such a wealth of encyclopaedic detail and philosophic acumen? Is sociology the way? Often sociology is taught as if it is the search for the ideal scholar who can engage in rhetoric, logic and dialectic. And it is true that students are often attracted to sociology because it holds out the possibility of "intellectual adventure".

Still systematic sociological reflection need not be a romantic quest for experiential fullness, nor a heroic odyssey for a mythic Grand Theory. It is much more "down to earth". Yes, it is true that an alternative theoretic vision for the university comes into view, breaking with the demeaning specialisation that robs the scientific vocation of its true stature.

But sociological thinking must strive to cultivate a deepened respect for all the other sciences and this must involve mastering details of analysis and argument beyond what is conventionally discussed in Sociology courses. Moreover, sociological reflection must also deepen respect for philosophical systematics and seek to become articulate especially in so far as they have a bearing upon sociological theory.

The foundations for sociology must be laid philosophically and historically. Because the contemporary university curriculum is back-to-front, this discussion merely illustrates the inherent philosophical and historical character of sociological research.

Sociology, **as a discipline**, emerged in *reaction* to the social consequences of the Enlightenment and has ever since developed its own social-philosophical coloration in these terms. Sociology needs to develop its own **philosophical** critique of the Enlightenment's idolatrous attitude to Reason and Human Personality.

Definition : Social Theory

Social theory is concerned with study of society in general. It is concerned with developing abstract and conceptual insight in the investigation of institutions, organisations and relationships. These structures of society function in a social context which includes religious, public legal, moral, aesthetic, symbolic and economic aspects. These aspects also require elucidation in social theory so that the ongoing structuring of society in its historical context can be elucidated theoretically. Social theory links the study of society to the various special sciences and gives a conceptual foundation for the specialist study of manners, customs and social habit.

Some Sociological Concepts

Civil religion (Initially published in *Readers Guide to the Social Sciences* 2001).

A brief note on the works, ancient and modern, important for understanding “civil religion” could easily become an introduction to civilization 10 miles long and 1mm thick. We could start with Aristotle’s “virtue”, move to Constantine, the Romanization of Christianity, the Reformation, Hooker and tolerance, and close with religion in American and a hint about the Islam problematic for the global politics of the 21st century. Instead this statement starts with the American discussion because it remains formative for discussion in other locales, then considers the issue from a British/ European context, with some references to better understand civil religion around the globe.

BRYANT observes that the term “civil religion” originated with Rousseau’s distinction between the private religion of the devotee and the “religion of the citizenry” which is integral to any citizen’s relation to society and Government. Such fixed social sentiments are necessary for good citizenry. Such a communitarian view, mediated through Durkheim, has been the framework for BELLAH in his various contributions. The latest is found in BELLAH *et al* in which the communitarian critique of individualistic liberalism - consigning all religion to the private devotional realm where it cannot interfere with the rational pursuit of our common self-interest in the public sphere - is brought up to date. The communitarian interpretation of the United States constitution assumes a prohibition upon the Congress from making *any* law concerning the establishment of religion. The communitarian interpretation sees the constitution as promoting free exercise of religion. The famous Amendment is read so that i. the USA shall not establish any religion or religions; and ii. the USA as polity shall allow for the freedom of the citizenry in its fullest extent. The communitarian interpretation thus makes a “distinction between two distinctions”, as MARTY indicates, that is between church and state on the one hand - about which the State can and must make and enforce laws - and religion and politics on the other - about which the constitution support for non-establishment and free exercise provides clear guidelines for the form which any proposed “religious” law must take.

BELLAH notes (p.174) the views of George Washington who assumed that the United States, in all of its affairs, public and private that it was reliant upon an Invisible hand, a providential agency which cannot be denied.

ELSHTAIN continues the communitarian critique of individualism, noting the religious impact of individualism upon the fraying social fabric. Woodrow Wilson attempted to unite the country by “yanking the hyphen”. This earlier 20th century populism, driven, in effect, by a civil religious impulse, may have united the USA in a nationalistic sense, but the consequences of accepting such an implicit religious self-definition have been devastating. WUTHNOW views the USA in terms of a battle between two dominant civil religions. The conservatives maintain their belief in a divine sanction given to the American experiment. The liberals see themselves acting on behalf of all humanity. SKILLEN, on the other hand, sees conservative and liberal “religions” united in an underlying “undifferentiated moral discourse”. The discourse is characterized by a “winner takes all” mentality in the electoral process and by other problems which the liberal-conservative world-view cannot tackle. Discussion of the place of religion in the American polity is characterized by an ongoing failure to confront complex differentiated society with a principled pluralism that lawfully respects the diversity of religious visions driving citizens who are always more than just citizens. MARTY’s contribution aims to restore the contribution which genuine biblical faith could make to American public affairs. What kind of religion is it, he asks rhetorically, in which one’s God needs worshippers so He can ensure His rule over the nation or the earth? As with other American argument about civil religion this argument indicates an “upfront” desire for a renewal in Christian understanding of the relation of faith to politics. MARTY’s distinction between civic religion and civil religion also appears in BRYANT’s attempt to develop a comparative view of how religion is related to the civil order across the globe. Thus he locates the “civil religion” option within a comparative analysis of the various combinations and permutations found in recent and not-so-recent history. BRYANT’s theoretical reflections are very important because they are formulated historically and with a global focus. Unlike the liberal debaters of USA who, as WUTHNOW points out, tend to assume that the resolution of their local America problems will shape the entire world’s destiny, BRYANT’s contribution opens the way to critical and comparative theoretical analysis of the various normative and historical resolutions of this issue.

FOGARTY's 1953 work remains a landmark, particularly now in the context of the European Union and the fall of communism. Various Christian political responses embodying the Roman Catholic and Reformed critiques of modernism were initiated in the final decades of the 19th century and they still have an enduring, if not muted, impact in Europe. Christian democracy is now also emerging in central and eastern Europe, and in lands which once were European colonies. The term "civil religion" is no longer the exclusive concept liberal critique of all religion which will not consign itself to the private realm. STACKHOUSE's comparative analysis of how religious creeds are woven into the warp and woof of human rights legislation likewise shows that religion, even when ideologically banished from the public realm, seems always to be active and re-active, if not always pro-active.

MARTIN's appendix is particularly pertinent to understanding how the Constantinian entrenchment of Roman notions of patriarchy, hierarchy, precedent and privilege, still has an ongoing function within Anglicanism. The Archbishop becomes a political activist in certain extreme conditions, and presumably if he (or she) has not spoken there really is no possibility of developing a Christian political viewpoint. MARTIN's approach also helps to identify why England particularly, with its established church, does not, and maybe cannot, follow the European Christian democratic pattern.

For TURNER the comparative sociological viewpoint is extended even further. The issue of "civil religion" is now embedded in the processes of modernization, internationalism and cosmopolitanism. Kant's universal morality, formulated at the outset of Europe's colonial expansion, may have fired a global ethic, but it implied a philosophy of history in which imperial Christianity stamped its importance upon civilization and this then must also include a negative assessment of other world religions, particularly Islam. WILSON had already noticed this with his three-fold comparing and contrasting of Christian church/state relations with the inextricable interwovenness of religious and political institutions in Islam with the separation of religion and state in Buddhism. RUDOLPH's contribution is to point to the question of whether and how religion is a part of the civil sphere. This is a burning issue in those parts of the world that now enter a post-communist era. But it is also relevant, even in places where centralized communist regimes are still maintained. Transnational agreements and global markets, let alone military alliances formed to protect ethnic and religious minorities in other countries, reinforce the fact that in

the global society people are joined together in all kinds of ways which cross State boundaries. When people form homogenized groups they not only become a source of concern for others, they may also become a worry to themselves, because they then become visible in new ways, targets for possible attack from other homogenized groups. The question about “civil religion” is indeed the question of public justice as SKILLEN points out, not only in a complex and differentiated civil society in one nation, but also for a historically differentiated, complex and changing globe which has many religious and civil conflicts and pain.

REFERENCES

1. Robert Bellah *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post Traditional World* New York: Harper and Row 1970
2. Robert Bellah et al *The Good Society* New York: Alfred A Knopf 1991
3. Christopher G A Bryant “Civic Nation, Civil Society, Civil Religion” in John A Hall (ed) *Civil Society : Theory, History, Comparison* Cambridge UK: Polity Press 1997 pp.136-157.
4. Jean Bethke Elshtain “In Common Together: Unity, Diversity and Civic Virtue” in Michael Walzer (ed) *Toward a Global Civil Society* Providence RI: Berghahn Books pp. 77-97
5. Michael P Fogarty *Christian democracy in Western Europe 1820-1953* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
6. David Martin “*When the Archiepiscopal Trumpet Sounds*” in *A General Theory of Secularization* Oxford: Blackwell 1978 pp.306-8
7. Martin Marty “Civil Religion: Two Kinds of Two Kinds” in *Religion and Republic: The American Circumstance* Boston: The Beacon Press 1987 pp.77-94
8. Susanne Hoerber Rudolph “Dehomogenizing Religious Formations” in Susanne Hoerber Rudolph and James Piscatori (eds) *Transnational Religion and Fading States* Boulder Co & Oxford UK: Westview 1997 pp. 243-261.
9. James W Skillen *Recharging the American experiment : principled pluralism for genuine civic community* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1994
10. Max L Stackhouse *Creeds, Society and Human Rights: A Study in Three Cultures* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1984
11. Bryan S Turner *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism* London and New York: Routledge 1994
12. Bryan Wilson *Religion in Sociological Perspective* Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press 1982
13. Robert Wuthnow *The Restructuring of American Religion* Princeton: Princeton University Press 1988

Empiricism (Initially published in *Readers Guide to the Social Sciences* 2001).

In social science the term “empiricism” is ambiguous and loaded. It is not just a technical term but its use implies a context of intense theoretical conflict. Science is not just experiment and the publication of results. Scientists theorize in a community of science, considering and judging their own work and the work of contemporaries and ancestors. Sometimes the judgments are also made about other scientific specialties, particularly when research has benefited from results beyond specialized borders. The term is used in evaluating scientific work, one’s own and that of others, an appeal to a norm that puts results in a good or bad light. The term may commend – “a worthy contribution to the empiricist tradition” – or it may criticize scientific results for “naive empiricism”. Data-gathering methods and theoretical assumptions are judged by reference to this norm. BECKER implies, with PARSONS, that appeal to the empirical involves the development of a scientific confidence to not only explain but to understand research.

The above summarizes the entries given by JARY & JARY, JOHNSON, HOULT, ABERCROMBIE ET AL, MARSHALL, WOODLAND, OUTHWAITE, PARMELEE, DERKSEN & GARTRELL, HAMLYN, WOLTERSTORFF and BLACKBURN. The last three are philosophical definitions of empiricism; and the preceding ones were composed for social scientific purposes. These and other such entries, which should be read slowly, give a good idea of how this term can be used. There are serious and divergent interpretations. CLOUSER addresses most aspects of this debate philosophically but also includes discussion of the scientific study of social structures.

PARMELEE’s definition refers to a scientific movement or a particular theory in the history of science. CLOUSER points out that the term can refer to scientific thinking as such. But, he argues, empirical openness should not hide its pre-scientific basis. Science always involves an appeal to reality and debates about the truth, and the structure of social scientific reflection, like science in general, requires a scientific openness which sharply distinguishes pre-scientific commitment, directing the theorizing, from the concrete results of scientific inquiry. Only such openness will short-circuit dogmatic tendencies. It is this self-critical attitude which is the ground for empirical openness. Such an epistemological view of science is consistent in a general way with the historical studies of BROOKE, BUTTERFIELD, HECKING, KUHN, MERTON, ROSS and WEBER, reminding late 20th

century secularized science about its historical and religious roots. To view science as inherently secular indicates the motivation of scientific investigation as much as any “religious” approaches, and debates over empiricism consistently bring world-views, values and religion onto the agenda. OUTHWAITE & BULMER specifically identify the empiricist view of the knowledge process as a would-be a direct presupposition-less account of reality.

Empiricism in philosophy and the social sciences also involves debate about the true value of trying to explain how science itself is possible. It is never just the attitude of the scientist to the “doing” of science; it is also about the way science itself is explained. For example, Locke’s explanation is at odds with CLOUSER. The empiricist view of experience, based upon abstract sensory properties (or bundles of them) raises the critical observation that we never experience such abstract properties. CLOUSER builds on Whitehead’s dissent from Hume’s doctrine “There is nothing in the mind not first in the senses”, in which Whitehead noted that the rule is not itself in the senses! It is something else. An account of “empiricism”, in all its empirical detail, must also explain this “something else”. It could be a “theory of theory” but, then on empiricist grounds, another theory of our “theory of theory”, must result *ad absurdum*.

CLOUSER’s contentious point is that “empiricism” in the sense of Locke, and those in the “mainline empiricist tradition”, involves a mythic assumption about science’s religious neutrality which prevents an open empirical attitude. In forms of “objectivism” emotion is excluded as the *a priori* polar opposite to reason. In “empiricism” religion is viewed as the opposite of science and must likewise first be excluded before scientific thinking is possible. But is this view the result of empirical induction? Empiricists may sometimes resort to the historiographical data of science to derive empirical generalizations about science’s historical relation to religion. In an empiricist frame of reference genuine theorizing brings about valid empirical generalizations. Such historical study will often bring about modifications to more strident forms of empiricism.

The historical and epistemological exposé of the myth of religious neutrality, appears, on the surface consistent with a post-modern approach. The post-modernist perspectives, as put forward by LYOTARD, HARDING, FLAX and RORTY, are quite amenable to historicism, with radically empiricist approaches to history. In much post-modern social

science the complexities of philosophical debate about empiricism no longer seem to hold any interest. HARDING's discussion, for example, places science, as a cultural institution of power, within the context of post-colonialism and feminism. But if her approach is to restore the empirical attitude, science is also subordinated to a pluralistic or post-modern ethic of liberation in which epistemologies of science are uncovered by a "borderlands epistemology". Her view is that the current idea of empiricism is still too uniformly bound to imperial attitudes of Eurocentric, Judaeo-Christian, male culture. HARDING's approach, with CHALMERS and SHILS, who stress an ethic of scientific humility, could result in a modified post-modern empiricism. FLAX sets forth a feminist view of woman, including the feminist scientist, as active embodiment of Freud's view of the female antipode of civilization. Such a strategy might appear to be anti-science, yet civilization and science can also function as opposites, particularly if science is accepted as a liberating force for a yet-to-be-determined future. FLAX calls for the fomenting of structural instability within shifting paradigms and turns KUHN's perspective in a feminist direction.

There are many ideological collisions, including CHALMERS' self-critical conclusion that discussion of science as a "thing" is itself wrong-headed and misleading. He is content to stay within physics, but now denies that it is necessary to assume an integrated scientific fabric for all sciences. Science is disparate and fragmented, a view consistent with LYOTARD's post-modernism. A scientist limited to empirical data within a particular disciplinary framework can no longer suggest an empiricist framework for science *per se*. Or rather, the empiricist approach is to refrain from making any such proscriptive overviews. It may no longer be valid to talk of science *per se*. The scientific enterprise, empirically focused, is a loose federation not a centrally governed republic. One overarching method, or a view of an all-encompassing encyclopedia, as CLOUSER intimates, is rejected as misconceived and even mischievous. CHALMERS, LYOTARD and WALLERSTEIN ET AL advocate empirical attitudes which reckon with the possibility that all possible data from all empirical investigation has no credible overall structure, even if science is now fired by a search, in RORTY's terms, for the strategy, or therapy, that works best. A new empiricism celebrates post-modernity, continuing scientific investigation of all the groups and sub-groups of peoples of the earth with their cultures and their systems of knowledge, and encourages all peoples to do likewise. With no overall structure, all previous empiricisms have been undermined by their mutually alternative scientific "meta-

naratives". This becomes the historical basis for the only possible empirical attitude. The post-Marxist "openness" of WALLERSTEIN ET AL to nature and history would turn the discussion of an open social science around, so that the future global community of social scientists can perform critical democratic functions in a de-centred world. Such sociology can no longer keep its social theory within disciplinary limits. The change of sub-title in the second edition of HAWTHORN's work illustrates this. Once there was a clear distinction, but the alternative histories of sociology, as a distinct academic discipline, have become historiographies of social theorizing and the aforementioned post-modern relativism or historical empiricism results. MOUZELIS calls attention to this trend reminding this new social scientific establishment that there is analytic and empirical value to be found in that modern sociological view of global society which now can be anchored in a non-European context.

The merging of sociology and social theory does not only mean a trend toward disparate theories but, as SKINNER indicates, a desire to recapture Grand Theory. The all-embracing interpretative frameworks of GADAMER, KUHN, HABERMAS and HUSSERL also mean that for many this is the time to "revisit" earlier perspectives of PARSONS, MERTON, and arch critic MILLS. The self-definition of "structural functionalism", as an empirical approach, is kept alive by ALEXANDER and BARBER.

REFERENCES

1. Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hull and Bryan S Turner "Empirical", "Empiricism" *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* 3rd edn. Harmondsworth. Penguin 1994 p.142
2. Jeffrey C Alexander *Positivism, Presuppositions and Current Controversies (Vol I of Theoretical Logic in Sociology)* Berkeley: University of California Press 1982
3. Bernard Barber "On the relations between philosophy of science and sociology of science" Chapter 15 in *Social Studies of Science* New Brunswick: Transaction 1990 pp.245-251
4. Howard S Becker *Tricks of the trade: how to think about your research while you're doing it* Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998
5. Simon Blackburn "Empiricism" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* Oxford and London: Oxford University Press 1994 p.119
6. John Hedley Brooke *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991

7. Herbert Butterfield *The Origins of Modern Science* Revised edition New York: Free Press 1957 (2nd edn London: Bell and Hyman 1985)
8. Alan F Chalmers *What is this thing called science? An assessment of the nature and status of science and its methods* 2ndedn St Lucia: University of Queensland Press 1982
9. Roy A Clouser *The myth of religious neutrality: an essay on the hidden role of religious belief in theories* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1991
10. Linda Derksen and John Gartrell "Scientific Explanation" in E F Borgatta and M L Borgatta *Encyclopedia of Sociology* New York: MacMillan Publishing Co 1992 pp.1711-1720
11. Jane Flax "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory" *Signs* 12:4, 1987pp. 621-643.
12. Hans-Georg Gadamer *Truth and Method* London: Sheed and Ward trans W Glen-Doepel 2nd edn 1979
13. Jürgen Habermas *Knowledge and Human Interests* trans J Shapiro Boston: Beacon Press 1968 (Cambridge: Polity Press 1987)
14. D W Hamlyn "Empiricism" in Paul Edwards (ed) *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* New York & London: Macmillan & The Free Press, Collier Macmillan 1967 Vol.2 pp. 499-505.
15. Sandra Harding *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms and Epistemologies* Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1998
16. Geoffrey Hawthorne *Enlightenment and Despair: a History of Sociology* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976 (2nd edition with a new sub-title: *A History of Social Theory* 1987)
17. S E Hecking "Sociological Christianity and Christian sociology: the paradox of early American sociology" *Religion and American Culture* 1993 3,1 pp. 49-67
18. Thomas Ford Hoult "Empirical" and "Empiricism" in *Dictionary of Modern Sociology* Totawa: Littlefield, Adams and Co 1967 p.118
19. Edmund Husserl *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy* Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1970.
20. David Jary & Julie Jary "Empiricism" in *Collins Dictionary of Sociology* 2nd edition Glasgow: Harper Collins 1995 pp.195-196
21. Allan G Johnson "Empirical" in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology* Oxford: Blackwell 1995 p.95
22. T S Kuhn *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Chicago: Chicago University Press 2nd edition 1970
23. Jean-François Lyotard *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1984
24. Gordon Marshall ed "Abstracted empiricism" and "Empiricism" *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* Oxford: Oxford University Press 19XX pp. 2, 149
25. Robert K Merton *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* New York: Howard Fertig 1938
26. C Wright Mills *The Sociological Imagination* New York. Oxford University Press 1959
27. Nicos Mouzelis "Modernity: a non-European conceptualization" *British Journal of Sociology* 50:1, March 1999 pp.141-159
28. William Outhwaite "Empiricism" in Michael Mann (ed) *The MacMillan Student Encyclopedia of Sociology* London: MacMillan 1983 p.110
29. William Outhwaite and Martin Bulmer "Objective/Objectivism" in Michael Mann (ed) *The MacMillan Student Encyclopedia of Sociology* London: MacMillan 1983 p.268

30. Maurice Parmelee "Empiricism" in Henry P Fairchild (ed) *Dictionary of Sociology* Westport Conn: Greenwood Press 1970 (repr of 1944) p.106
31. Talcott Parsons *The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company 1937
32. Richard Rorty *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980
33. Dorothy Ross *The Origins of American Social Science* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991
34. Edward A Shils "Legitimizing the Social Sciences: Meeting the Challenges to Objectivity and Integrity" in Charles Frankel (ed) *Controversies and Decisions: The Social Sciences and Public Policy* New York: Russell Sage Foundation 1976 pp. 273-290
35. Quentin Skinner (ed) *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985 (London: Canto 1990).
36. I Wallerstein et al *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences* Stanford: Stanford University Press 1996
37. Max Weber "Author's Introduction" in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Trans Talcott Parsons London: George Allen & Unwin 1930 pp 13-31
38. D J A Woodland "empirical/empiricism" in G Duncan Mitchell *A New Dictionary of the Social Sciences* New York: Aldine 1979 pp.65-66
39. Nicholas P Wolterstorff "Empiricism" in Robert Audi (ed) *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press 1985 pp.224-225

Objectivity (Initially published in *Readers Guide to the Social Sciences* 2001).

Objectivity refers to the way in which scientific analysis approaches its object, that which is under scientific investigation. The term is multivocal and loaded differently depending upon which philosophy of science drives the theory. Students should consult general and specialist dictionaries and encyclopedias because the definitions are percolated results of years of reflection and the subtleties do not easily emerge in fast readings seeking instant insight. LACEY directs us, via Latin, to the same issue: “what lies before” and “what stands over against”. The various definitions are replete with complexity, catapulting us into debates about the varieties of social science. OUTHWAITE & BULMER note that “objectivity” is often defined in contrast with “subjectivity”, that is in terms of a freedom from bias. MARSHALL notes that the term will often refer to a state of mind without which genuine science is impossible. Significant doubt exists as to whether “objectivity” is a valid goal, yet if social science can only offer research framed subjectively why should anyone listen? Alternatively, ABERCROMBIE ET AL identify objectivity as a goal, the implication being that even if ultimately objectivity cannot be achieved, nevertheless scientific investigation is best viewed as a rigorous effort to be free of bias and prejudice. The main drift seems to be that social science is not objective, nor is it desirable for it to rigorously try to be so.

JOHNSON differentiates technical and interpretative objectivity: The objective design of tools for scientific data gathering on the one hand and the interpretation of results on the other. In the first surveys are constructed for respondents to indicate their views, implying the elimination of designer bias in the framing of questions, enabling replication and collection of new sets of similarly defined data. Interpretation is always embedded in time, place and circumstance, so objectivity is mutually agreed upon, an ideal to which social scientific explanation is oriented. JARY & JARY neatly summarize the word’s usage in social scientific discussion, a reality independent of our view of it on the one hand, and knowledge that is valid and reliable on the other. Objective accounts, however constructed, are difficult, but this does not mean that only quantifiable explanations can be objective (see PORTER). HOULT’s definition depends upon a view that subjectivity and bias are the same thing and psychologically based in the emotions. Reason is the opposite of emotion. Objectivity, the opposite of subjectivity, is a matter of rational analysis suppressing all that is not rational. A similar view is found in the final paragraph of LEE & NEWBY, where the

effort to place taken-for-granted beliefs under critical view is described as Herculean, the problem of sociology.

NOVICK's historical documentation explains how "objectivity" underwent change in the American academic search for a scientific approach to society and history. This inquiry into what professional historians thought they were doing raises questions about the objective nature of the concept itself.

PORTER's definition is negative - when all matters of judgment and subjectivity have been excluded what is left is, by definition, useful and instructive. Such data can be viewed in quantitative terms. From this science derives genuine insight and its own authority. A reliance on numbers and quantification minimizes any need for intimacy or trust. Qualitative opinion may have its place but not in the scientific realm where what is measurable prevails.

HOULT's conventional view that "objectivity" must exclude emotion is based on an anthropological view that emotions are always opposed to reason. Emotions may not lead the way in the process of exploration, problem formulation, experimentation, discovery, analysis and explanation. But as FEUER indicates this is not the same as saying that emotions must be excluded. Such exclusion of emotions, and reference to them, is based upon a faulty understanding of the place of emotion *within* the work that must be done to establish scientific explanation. Any view of "objectivity" *qua concept* is itself dependent upon a prior anthropological viewpoint.

The problem of objectivity is confronted in sociology when it defines itself as a social science discipline. Yet the sociological analysis is also the scrutiny of public debate where appeals to "objectivity" are repeatedly made. The mass media claim "objectivity" in the sense of "truth in reporting". SILK discusses the American media's characterization of religion, the most delicate issue in civil society he says.

The sociological investigation of "objectivity" has other sociological modes as well. BERGER & LUCKMANN has been a basic text in this regard, and BERGER's sociology of religion examines how the "objectivity" of religion is socially constructed. Religion is both objective and subjective reality. BERGER follows Schütz - in which the objectivity of social structure is maintained by a shared inter-subjectivity - and Durkheim - in which the social

psychological world of individual action is functionally interdependent with the structure of society itself. MANNHEIM is also influential.

[OKIN's feminist analysis shows how the construction of "objective" gender roles have specific public legal implications. CONRAD examines the maneuverings of professional power in relation to the construction of objectivity in the arena of health and medicine. DAVIES indicates that social class must be studied as people's subjective view of their place in any objective class matrix. DOWNES & ROCK extend analysis to the "objective" norms that pertain in crime and law enforcement, and SZASZ argues that conventional science, psychiatry and legal institutions all contribute to perpetuating the "myth of mental illness".]

This perspective is also found implicit in many feminist analyses gender roles, the dominance of medical and psychiatric power, the perception of class and status, the control of deviance, the institutions of law and the authority of science. PIAGET considers it in developmental terms, an acquired attribute disclosed in the maturation of the child, located through a physiological confrontation with the environment.

BROWN's asserts that "objectivity is social" which compares with BOURDIEU's frustrating discussion of "objectivity" announces that "one cannot avoid having to objectify the objectifying subject". The "objectifying subject" is the thinker in the act of theoretical reflection. BOURDIEU's complex viewpoint of the self, theoretically active in making itself objective, is compatible with RORTY's dualistic concept by which he would capture the ways humans make sense of their lives. One road is that the sharing stories in community, embodying solidarity. The other is the road of distance and difference, finding oneself by appeal to a non-human reality. This is objectivity.

NISBET calls upon social scientists to forego the knee-jerk reactions which critical social science make in repudiation of objectivity as the goal for social science. WEBER is the standard statement by which sociology, politics and economics still explain their commitment to "objectivity". The word "scientific" is often considered inappropriate for a social science of people, but WEBER's analysis attempted to rescue the scientific task from any such positivist problematic.

REFERENCES

1. Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hull and Bryan S Turner "Objectivity" *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* 3rd edn. Harmondsworth. Penguin 1994 p.290
2. Peter L Berger *The Social Reality of Religion* Harmondsworth: Penguin 1973
3. Peter L Berger & Thomas Luckmann *The Social Construction of Reality* Harmondsworth: Penguin 1975
4. S C Browne *Objectivity and Cultural Divergence* Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series 17 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984
5. Pierre Bourdieu *Homo Academicus* (trans Peter Collier) Stanford: Stanford University Press 1984
6. P Conrad "Medicalisation and Social Control" *Annual Review of Sociology* 1992, 18:209-232
7. A F Davies *Images of Class* Sydney: Sydney University Press 1967
8. David Downes and Paul Rock *Understanding Deviance* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1982
9. Lewis Feuer *Varieties of Scientific Explanation: Emotive Aims in Scientific Hypotheses* New Brunswick: Transaction 1995
10. *Thomas Ford Houlst "Objectivity" in *Dictionary of Modern Sociology* Totawa: Littlefield, Adams and Co 1967 p.224
11. *David Jary & Julie Jary "Objectivity" in *Collins Dictionary of Sociology* 2nd edition Glasgow: Harper Collins 1995 pp.456
12. *Allan G Johnson "Objectivity" in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology* Oxford: Blackwell 1995 p.193
13. *A R Lacey "Object" in *A Dictionary of Philosophy* 3rdedn London and New York: Routledge 1996 pp.234-235
14. David Lee and Howard Newby "Epilogue" *The Problem of Sociology* London: Unwin Hyman 1989 pp. 339-345.
15. K Mannheim *Ideology and Utopia: an Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* Translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1936
16. *Gordon Marshall ed "Objectivity" in *The Concise Oxford dictionary of Sociology* Oxford: Oxford University Press 19XX pp. 362-363
17. Robert Nisbet "Subjective Si! Objective No!" in Gresham Riley (ed) *Value, Objectivity and the Social Sciences* Reading MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co 1974 pp.14-20 (reprint of *New York Times Book Review* April 5, 1970 pp.1-2, 36-7)
18. Peter Novick *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988
19. Susan Moller Okin *Justice, Gender and the Family* New York: Basic Books
20. *William Outhwaite and Martin Bulmer "Objective/Objectivism" in Michael Mann (ed) *The MacMillan Student Encyclopedia of Sociology* London: MacMillan 1983 p.268
21. Jean Piaget *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* New York: WW Norton and Co 1952
22. Theodore M Porter *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* Princeton: Princeton University Press 1995
23. Richard Rorty "Solidarity or Objectivity?" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* Philosophical Papers Vol.1 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991 pp.21-34

24. Mark Silk *Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion in America* Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1995
25. Thomas Szasz *Ideology and Insanity: Essays on the Psychiatric Dehumanisation of Man* New York: Anchor 1970
26. Max Weber "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (translated and edited by Edward A Shils and Henry A Finch) New York: The Free Press 1949 pp.50-122.