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Philosophy and Sociology

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The conjunction between philosophy and sociology inescapably involves examining the relationship between two areas of fundamental controversy. In both disciplines there are schools of thought whose differences are deep and often longstanding. How one treats this fact appears to vary systematically, depending on the individual's school of thought. Are these differences logically mutually exclusive, merely matters of emphasis, or are they really complementary, capable of a theoretical synthesis? Does the existence of diverse schools of thought indicate that a discipline is still immature and prescientific in that it lacks a paradigm, or are there reasons to believe that it will never rise beyond the level of opinion? Does the existence of these schools of thought indicate a healthy theoretical pluralism which is essential for intellectual progress, or are they a veritable scandal in the academic community? Are these schools of thought a passing development phase which the fuller utilization of scientific method will duly exorcise, or are they something much more endemic?

On this point there has been great controversy about the nature of the scientific method. Recently some philosophers and historians of science have argued that such a method is not apparent in the history of science, and also that such a method is detrimental to scientific progress (Feyerabend, 1975). In short, we find deeply divergent accounts of both the proper methodology and field of investigation in both philosophy and sociology, ramified by deeply divergent accounts of

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these, all of which are supported by diverse historiographical accounts of the developments of the two disciplines.

Christian vs Humanist Perspective

This whole situation seems to provide a *prima facie* case for the view that there is no sociology or philosophy per se, but always sociology *working within one perspective or another*. This paper is an attempt to provide some account of the relationship between philosophical and sociological perspectives within the broader context of a Christian perspective. Such an approach is essential, if it is true that all wisdom and knowledge are found in the revelation of God in Christ (Colossians 2:3). If the great theme of *creation, fall,* and *redemption* in Jesus Christ is the central meaning of created reality, then its significance can hardly be restricted to theology. Nor can it be excluded from philosophy and sociology on the grounds of some established division of academic labor. (Of course, there is a long tradition within Christendom of doing precisely this in terms of a dualism between faith and reason, grace and nature, and sacred science and "natural" science). While there are different explanations of this dualism, they all agree that the integrity of natural or scientific reason necessitates such a dualism. The sciences must be autonomous—free from any notion of revelation. Such integrity assumes that reason is unaffected by "the fall," in no need of redemption or redirection. Such limited autonomy is a huge concession to the central Western philosophical tradition of the unlimited autonomy of theoretical thought (Wolters, 1975). Accordingly, the problems of philosophy and sociology fall within the domain of reason. Therefore a Christian philosophy or sociology is regarded not simply as a complex and difficult project, but as a contradiction in terms. According to this view, such a project cannot be the central responsibility of Christian philosophers and sociologists. The point at issue here is whether, in the last analysis, the Christian religion provides *the sole perspective in terms of which reality is rightly to be understood.*

Secular Humanism—Reason Autonomous

It hardly needs to be said that the direction of modern philosophy since Descartes, and virtually the whole sociological tradition, is fundamentally opposed to such a recognition of the Christian faith. Rather both are motivated by an antithetical tradition, namely that of secular

humanism. Indeed the whole movement of modern thought can be viewed as a massive attempt to eliminate such commitments, prejudices, and presuppositions from human thought and to seek direction from unaided human reason. The Enlightenment philosopher, David Hume (1774), makes clear his exclusive and unqualified commitment to autonomous human thought when he writes:

> Tis certainly a kind of indignity to philosophy, whose *sovereign authority* ought everywhere to be acknowledged to oblige her on every occasion to make apologies for her conclusions, and justify herself to every particular art and science which may be offended at her. *This puts one in mind of a king being arraigned for high treason against his subjects (p. 532).*

Young Karl Marx, in his PhD thesis, rightly interprets and shares the ultimate commitment underlying this quotation. He sees it as a declaration of opposition "against all gods, heavenly and earthly, who do not acknowledge the consciousness of man as the supreme divinity. There must be no god on a level with it" (Marx and Engels, 1955:15). This declaration of autonomy, this confession of the finality of man, is the root of all humanist thought in both philosophy and sociology.

In the academic world today, however, such spirited declarations are rather rare. There are two main reasons for this. In the first place, there is little for the secular humanist professor to protest against, for the mind of the university has been radically secularized, and perhaps is the major agent of secularization. However, if Christian scholars in higher education began to reform scholarship on the basis of the principle we have enunciated (namely, that the Christian religion provides the sole perspective in terms of which reality is rightly to be understood), then the antithetical principle of humanist autonomy would rapidly be articulated. In the second place, those who are committed to the autonomy of reason believe in its neutrality with respect to ultimate beliefs and worldviews. More explicitly, while reason may lead to ultimate beliefs and worldviews as conclusions, it is vehemently denied that its conclusions are more of the nature of the explication of the presuppositions with which it started.

Positivism as a Secular Humanist Ideology

A very influential form of this belief in the autonomy and neutrality of reason, or theoretical thought, is *positivism*. Two key figures

in the development of positivism are Hume and Comte, the latter of whom gave sociology its name. Positivist epistemology has two major aspects: a view of the *source* of human knowledge, and a view of the *historical stages of the development* of human knowledge. With respect to the former, commitment is to empiricism—the theory that all genuine knowledge derives from and is about sensations. Modern positivism, known as *logical positivism,* has sought to provide a verification principle by which genuine knowledge (genuinely cognitive language) may be distinguished from that which is not. The prime examples of the latter being the claims of metaphysics and religion. With respect to the historical development of knowledge, Comte maintained that it had progressively passed from the level of *theological* explanation (explaining phenomena in terms of gods and spirits), to *metaphysical* explanation (in terms of abstract principles and essences), then to the final and highest stage of *scientific* explanation. For Comte the "world" that science describes is *the* world, and its method *the* method of knowledge itself. He announced his determination not to accept any statement as worthy of belief that could not be verified by the methods of empirical science. "Our real business," he wrote, "is to analyze accurately the circumstances of phenomena and to connect them by the natural relations of succession and resemblance."

This positivist view of the sources and development of human knowledge has become almost common sense to the academic world, at least to those who think of themselves as "scientific." Innumerable textbooks in every "scientific" subject have told how their discipline has freed itself from bondage to religion and philosophy and entered into the freedom of the promised land of the scientific method. The logical positivists propagated the view that any residual problems they experienced would be resolved by the total elimination of metaphysics. This would be achieved by a "rational reconstruction" of the discipline in terms of logical positivist principles. Undoubtedly, some form of positivism or scientism may well remain very influential in the academic world. But there are reasons to believe that positivism in particular, and the dogma of the autonomy of theoretical thought in general, are, at the very least, highly problematic.

The Case Against Positivism

The structure of my argument against positivism has two steps. First, I will adduce grounds why no science, including sociology, can be philosophically neutral. In other words, it is impossible for any scientific discipline to leave metaphysics behind. Secondly, I will argue that philosophy itself cannot be religiously neutral. Inevitably it is based on religious presuppositions.

My first step concerns the thesis that sociology and all other sciences have philosophical presuppositions. It seems to me that considerable support for this thesis can be derived from two sources: (1) from contemporary developments in the philosophy of science and (2) from a careful consideration of the sciences themselves.

The Philosophy of Science Argument

One of the most noticeable features in the philosophy of science over recent decades has been the progressive collapse of the logical positivist view of science (Radnitzky, 1973). The attempts of logical positivism to provide a justified demarcation between the "scientific" (meaningful) and the "metaphysical" (meaningless) have foundered. No satisfactory solution was found to the early recognized self-reference problem of the verification principle itself. The principle maintained that all meaningful propositions are either "empirical" or "analytical," but one must not regard the principle itself as belonging to either category. If it was regarded as some sort of empirical claim, then it was most likely false. But if it was analytical, then there was no reason why it could not be dismissed as a very arbitrary stipulative definition of the terms "meaningful" and "meaningless." If, however, it was neither empirical nor analytical, then the principle was itself meaningless, which brought it precisely into the same category logical positivism used to dismiss metaphysics and theology.

Apart from the status of the principle there were even deeper problems about its content. When strict criteria of meaning were laid down sufficient to exclude metaphysics (this would also exclude the epistemology and metaphysics of logical positivism), upon careful examination it was realized that huge areas of science had been excluded too. When the criteria were liberalized to prevent such exclusion, they signally failed to serve their central purpose, i.e., to exclude (other people's) metaphysics. While the verification principle purported to derive from a universally valid theory of linguistic-and-cognitive meaning, the history of its continuous revisions were clearly controlled by a prior commitment to a scientistic positivism. This itself was made plausible by a yet deeper commitment to a secularized world-view.

Positivism, Its Epistemology and Metaphysics

For our present purposes, perhaps the most significant breakdown of the logical positivist research program is the formulation of its own position. In spite of verbal denials, it patently could not avoid involvement in epistemological and metaphysical theories and decisions. This was precisely what its program, its revolution in philosophy intended to transcend. In short, in spite of immense industry and ingenuity, this massive attempt to provide a way of "freeing" science from metaphysics has signally failed. Most contemporary philosophers of science will concede, some more willingly than others, that science and philosophy are structurally interconnected. Indeed the positivists' claim that theirs is *a* or *the* "scientific philosophy" is now widely dismissed, because of the huge gulf between the image of science provided by studies of the past and present development of science, and that of the positivist image. The positivist image is now seen by many philosophers of science as little more than a projection of the propositional calculus from the field of formal logic.

In fact, the successive shifts which have occurred in the philosophy of science provide considerable support for the view that the sciences are inconceivable outside of metaphysical frameworks. Henry Skolimowski has formulated the main outline of these shifts:

1. *Facts and observations* of primary importance to logical empiricists and most empiricists.
2. *Problems, conjectures (theories) and refutations* of primary importance to Popper; on this level "facts" and "observations" are determined by our problems and theories.
3. *Paradigms* of primary importance to Kuhn. They determine, at least partially, not only the content of our theories, but also our comprehension of our "facts."
4. *Metaphysical research programs* or *conceptual frameworks:* these not only provide conceptual tools and determine the nature of problems, but usually spell out what counts as genuine science, thereby determining the scope of science; in doing so it implicitly or explicitly defines the meaning of the objectivity of science and not infrequently it suggests the concept of truth (Skolimowski, 1974:490-1).

The pattern that clearly emerges here is that serious attempts to develop a theory of science have required increasingly larger and more comprehensive conceptual units. This suggests a model of science as a hierarchy of frameworks which provide a continuity between facts and

observations at one extreme, and very general metaphysical and epistemological theories at the other.

The Argument from the Sciences

There are grounds for believing that this model can equally be supported by a direct examination of the various sciences themselves. The ubiquitous feature of the sciences, indeed of all fields of scholarship to which I wish to draw attention in this context, is the existence of *schools of thought*. Schools of thought are by no means restricted to the humanities and social sciences, but are equally present in mathematics, physics, and biology. The differences between schools of thought tend to be systematic. They cannot be resolved by appeal to "facts" and observations," for what constitutes acceptable "facts" and "observations" for a discipline is disputable. Nor are the disputes merely apparent with the two accounts complementary to each other. For such a theory would then, if developed, constitute another school of thought at odds with the others, especially with those it had claimed to absorb and unify. Nor are appeals to the professional incompetence of one or more parties likely to withstand examination. In most cases the dispute will turn out to be at each of Skolimowski's levels 1—4. To put the matter in general terms, the disputes will be about *where one must stand in order to see the entire field aright, and how one ought to proceed with theoretical enquiries concerning the field.*

Sociological Schools of Thought

Martindale's Position

With respect to schools of thought in sociology there are two works of particular interest: Don Martindale's *The Nature and Types of Sociological Theory* and Walter Wallace's *Sociological Theory*. Martindale's work is a valuable study of the historical development of the main schools of sociological theory. He writes:

Because most schools of sociological theory have, until recently, drawn inspiration from Western philosophy, their origins in this matrix have been traced, in order to clarify the main propositions and problems of the different sociological schools. To ignore these philosophical origins is to cut oneself off from insight into some of the most fundamental affinities of our discipline with others. . . . In the case of every school of sociology to develop except the very last—sociological functionalism—discussion has begun with the philosophers. As systems of ideas, all the early schools of socio-

logical theory originated as philosophic points of view. . . .
Positivistic organicism is made possible by the fusion of older forms
of philosophic idealism and empiricism. Conflict sociology is the
scientific extension of historical empiricism. Formalism was sug-
gested by neo-Kantian empiricism and phenomenology. Pluralistic
behaviorism and social-action theory found their point of departure
in neo-idealism. Symbolic interactionism is the American form of
social science proceeding most directly from pragmatism (Martin-
dale, 1964:viii,x).

While much of the substance of Martindale's book bears out these
contentions, nonetheless his commitment to positivism leads him to
restrict the influence of philosophy on sociology essentially to the past.
In the same context as the quotation above, he writes:

This cannot be taken to suggest that these origins had permanent
importance for sociological theory. Often the philosophical parent
model varies greatly from the sociological theory based on it. This
is inevitable, for the precondition of the scientific development of
an idea is its empirical fertility. The origin of a school quickly
recedes in importance (p.x).

Martindale's positivistic historical perspective comes clearly into view
when somewhat later he maintains:

The separation of sociology from philosophy was long an-
ticipated by the departure of natural science therefrom. In fact, it
was the great success attendant upon the separation of physical
science from philosophy that provided a major motive for the es-
tablishment of independent social science. For this reason special
interest attaches to the factors promoting the independence of
physical science (p. 19).

The two crucial factors that Martindale identifies are as follows: First,

. . . the acquisition of the rational proof permitted philosophy to
acquire an autonomy, a self-determination, which facilitated its
separation from theology. When the truth—establishing func-
tion—was located in the thought process itself, no institutional
hierarchy was required to fix the truth. Mythological, theological,
and magical types of thought were thoroughly undermined by the
self-correcting power of the new philosophy (p. 19).

The second factor for Martindale was the extension of this rational au-

tonomy into the area of empirical knowledge by means of experiment.

We are in profound agreement with Martindale's first quotation
concerning the vital historical relation between philosophy and so-
ciology. Nevertheless, his positivistic framework which effectively
negates the contemporary significance of this insight seems entirely
mistaken. While one can agree that there may be very considerable
changes between a philosophical school of thought and a sociological
perspective to which it gives rise, this in no way eliminates our conten-
tion that a philosophical framework continues to structure the dis-
cipline. Furthermore, the framework itself develops and may well di-
vide into subschools. Indeed, Martindale himself has not found it possi-
ble, in spite of his positivism, to characterize contemporary sociological
schools of thought without reference to their philosophical differences.

In our third quotation from Martindale he maintains that natural
science has long been independent of philosophy. Of course, this thesis
is central to positivistic history and philosophy of science and has be-
come part of the folk wisdom of the academic community. However,
both positivistic history and philosophy of science are being increas-
ingly challenged. The best and most recent study of the birth of
modern natural science, Eugene M. Klaaren's *Religious Origins of
Modern Science*, maintains that

conflict and reformation in Western theologies of creation made
the rise of many natural sciences from the older natural philosophy
a distinct and lively possibility; belief in divine creation was
presupposed in the rise of modern natural science (1977:v).

While a positivistically inclined philosophy of science (because of its
definition of religion, science, and philosophy and their relations)
would discount Klaaren's study, more recent philosophy of science is
much more open to entertaining the idea of structural relations
between science, philosophy, and religion. We will consider Martin-
dale's view of philosophy as autonomous later. For the present it should
be noted that his view of science as the combination of "rational proof"
and "experiment" remains stuck at Skolimowski's level one, and should
be dismissed as obsolete positivist dogma with no real point of contact
with the natural sciences—not to mention sociology.

The One and the Many

The impotence of such a dogma to direct sociology is evident in

the last section of Martindale's book which is headed "Toward Integration." After characterizing the diverse sociological perspectives for more than five hundred pages he spends just over one page on the subject of integration. According to classical and modern positivist expectations, once a discipline has become "scientific," schools of thought should be left behind. Surely such divergencies are due to religious and metaphysical prejudices from which devotion to scientific method frees us. Martindale's unspoken dilemma is that he wants to claim that sociology is scientific in a positivist sense, and yet he is not prepared to dismiss all but one school of thought as "unscientific." He maintains that the various schools of thought are "true theoretical alternatives."

Nevertheless, in the interest of theoretical integration he urges us not to look at the "distinctive features in a theory," but to the elements of basic agreement that he claims are "a common stock of terms, concepts and empirical generalizations" that are "increasingly shared by all schools" (1964:54). This latter claim is certainly a central expectation of the positivist theory of science. Such a consensus may only be visible to the eye of positivist faith, for Martindale provides us with no evidence for it. The suggestion that it is a mistake to look at the distinctive features of a theory is hard to distinguish from an avoidance of counter-evidence. Actually there is much in contemporary philosophy of science that would support the view that Martindale *cannot* supply any evidence. The reason for this is that terms and concepts are "theory laden," i.e., their meaning is tied in with the theoretical perspective to which they belong. Furthermore, empirical generalizations must be formulated by means of their theory-laden concepts. In fact, the different sociological perspectives are identified by the distinctive concepts that they employ. Although certain of them use common terms, it is doubtful if they bear the same meanings.

He Looks for a Positivist Messiah

It is perhaps because the prospects of a positivist resolution of the fragmentation of sociology seems so bleak and hopeless that Martindale's thought takes a millennialist turn in the closing paragraph of his book. He hangs on to his positivist faith against all odds, and awaits the coming of a positivist messiah who will develop the unified theory that will explain and reveal all. He says:

From the perspective developed here, it is possible to offer

neither easy solutions for the integration of theory nor utopian hopes for sociology as a boon to mankind. It is not even possible to offer that sop to the Western conscience—all things yield to hard work. In the cooperation of reason and energy, within the tinder is at hand and the sparks are struck from mother wit, sociology or a Maxwell who will take up the materials cast up by chance and worked up with patient labor, clarify them in the crystalline formations of his logic, and fuse them in the fire of his love (1964:541-2).

Therefore, our general conclusion here is that positivism's highly reductionistic conception of scientific knowledge thoroughly incapacitates it from coming to grips with both the historical development and the present shape of science in general, and sociology in particular.

Wallace's Systematic Approach

We turn now to Walter Wallace's *Sociological Theory* which has a systematic approach to the diverse sociological schools of thought, rather than a historical one. While his work shares some of the problems of Martindale's, he is able to make much more intellectual contact with the eleven schools of thought he discusses. He is able to do this precisely because he drops, at least in measure, the positivist veto on the recognition of philosophy. This is perhaps inevitable because his attempt to produce a framework for integrating, as well as differentiating, these eleven schools is itself largely an exercise in systematic philosophy. This is not to say that Wallace actively tries to connect sociology with philosophy. In discussing the possible dimensions in terms of which the schools of sociology might be classified, it is the "content," rather than the "relations" of sociology, he has made central. He writes:

In the present case, I have tried to select dimensions that refer directly to the sociological subject matter as such, and have avoided dimensions that refer, instead, to non-sociological thought systems. That is, I have rejected philosophy of science descriptions like "positivistic," "phenomenological," and "systemic." . . . I have asked in short, What kind of direct observations does each theory imply?—rather than asking, What kind of non-sociological conceptual framework does each theory resemble (1969:2-3)?

Wallace's concern with the content of sociological theories leads him to recognize that in order to locate a sociological perspective two questions are essential:

(1) How is the social *defined?* (2) How is the social *explained* (i.e., by what classes of phenomena)? *Both questions are required, and joint answers to them will be sought here,* because it seems wholly inadequate to differentiate theories in terms of the single, loose, and indefinite question of what they are "interested in," or what their "approach" is, or what they "deal with," although this is often done (1969:5).

Classifying Sociological Theories

In terms of the definitional and explanatory dimensions embodied in these questions, Wallace proposes the following property space for classifying sociological theories (1969:13):

The Principal Behavioral Relations that *Define* the Social are:

The Principal Phenomena that *Explain* the Social are:		Objective (Materialist)	Subjective (Idealist)
	Imposed on the Social (Determined)		
	Generated by the Social (Free-willed)		

Wallace's discussion of his taxonomy is highly illuminating. He writes that

... some attention should be paid to certain broadly philosophical implications of the property-space itself. Although the dimensions of the space were inductively derived from inspecting the data (i.e., current sociological theories), on reflection it appears that these dimensions are closely related to two central and long-lived philosophical problems (indicative terms for them are given in figure 1). Thus the question of whether the social is to be defined in terms of subjective or objective behavior relations seems to reflect philosophical problems long expressed in the antinomies of idealism and materialism. ... Similarly, the question of whether the fundamental explaining conditions are imposed on, or generated by, the social seems to echo the still more resounding philosophical ques-

tions of whether man is to be considered primarily a determined consequence of prior and/or higher events, or as primarily a free-willed maker of his own constitution and history. ... Inasmuch as the broadly philosophical differences I have mentioned are at least as tenaciously contested as are the more narrow scientific differences, the connections between the two may help account for an occasional vigor in arguments regarding sociological theory, since what may ultimately be at stake are world-views and not merely society-views (1969:14).

Philosophy and Sociology Are Related

Several comments are in order here. First, is it correct to speak of Wallace's property space as having "philosophical implications" rather than "philosophical presuppositions"? His choice of the former phrase seems to be based on the assumption that science is autonomous with respect to philosophy—scientific theories being "... inductively derived from inspecting the data. ..." Furthermore, the phrase "philosophical implications" suggests that philosophy is not autonomous with respect to science. May not philosophy have "scientific implications"?

Second, in spite of Wallace's tendency to minimize the full significance of philosophy for sociology, his claim that the major contemporary sociological theories can be significantly classified in terms of his property space marks a decisive break with positivism. In short, his claim is that contemporary sociological perspectives make a philosophical choice between materialism and idealism with respect to their *definition* of the social. Furthermore, they make another philosophical choice between freedom and determinism with respect to their mode of *explanation* of the social.

Wallace's Impasse and Hope

In the end, Wallace reaches an impasse—one without the consolation of the hope of a positivist messiah such as sustained Martindale. His final words are analogous to Sartre's thesis that man is a "futile passion" because his desire to be God can never be realized, since the very concept of God within Sartre's philosophical framework is self-contradictory. Wallace writes:

Sociology as a whole ... may be described as an ultimately vain but irresistible search for a single general theory incorporating at

least the dimensions discussed in this essay, and to which all special theories, all empirical generalizations, all hypotheses, and all observations regarding social phenomena can be accurately related and thereby made intelligible (1969:59).

While Wallace does not make it explicit, I would offer two suggestions as to why he is convinced of the ultimate vanity of sociology. First, the ideal of a single general theory is itself thoroughly mistaken. It is part of what Rom Harre[2] has called the "mythology of deductivism," which he has subjected to a devastating critique (1970:1-32). Note, there is no sign of any such theory in physics. This ideal undoubtedly has played a significant role in behaviorist psychology with stimulus-and-response posing as the one general theory. However, far from vindicating this ideal, the history of behaviorism provides something much closer to a *reductio ad absurdum* (Koch, 1964; 1959). Second, Wallace thinks of philosophical positions (e.g., with respect to idealism, materialism, freedom, and determinism) as being tied to world-views and ultimate commitments. The result is, there is no "rational" way to move from the philosophical fragmentation of sociology in terms of these differences to a unified general theory which would clearly need a single agreed philosophical basis.

Résumé
At this point let us review the rather lengthy course of our argument and introduce the next stage. Our overall task in this paper is to introduce a Christian perspective on the relationship between philosophy and sociology with a view to clarifying the Christian task in sociology. We began with the thesis that "the Christian perspective is the sole perspective in terms of which reality is rightly understood," but this has been radically rejected by the modern philosophical and sociological tradition. We illustrated this by reference to Hume, Marx, and Comte—for whom Christianity was irrational superstition, reactionary bourgeois ideology, and an obsolete form of mythological explanation, respectively. We then focused on positivism as a theory of the source and the historical stages of the development of human knowledge. We chose positivism because it was central to the secularization (de-Christianization) of Western thought in both philosophy and the sciences, including sociology. Consequently what stood in the way of any contemporary Christian reformation of scholarship was the positivist

assertion of the autonomy of both philosophy and science with respect to religion, and the autonomy of science with respect to philosophy.

We then argued that positivism should be abandoned both as a philosophy and as a historiography of science. Our main arguments were that positivism suffered from grave internal contradictions and that it had little or no point of contact with the sciences. In particular, we argued that it could throw no light on an important and ubiquitous feature of all forms of theoretical inquiry, the existence of diverse schools of thought. This we sought to illustrate by reference to the works of Martindale and Wallace. By denying that philosophy had any role in contemporary sociology Martindale found himself unable to make any sense of the fragmenting role of various schools of thought. Wallace, although trying to stay close to positivism, concluded that the modern schools of sociological thought could only be accounted for if it was recognized that they rested on conflicting major philosophical assumptions and choices concerning materialism, idealism, freedom, and determinism. Wallace believed that these choices were rooted in different world-views. In part, his conclusion anticipates our next step which is to argue that just as sociology cannot proceed without philosophy, so philosophy cannot proceed without religion or ultimate commitments.

Philosophy and Ultimate Commitments
While it might seem evident to positivistically minded sociologists that philosophical ideas are "relative" to class, nationality, and values, this has been resisted by philosophers who claim that their theories are universally valid or rationally self-evident. This parallels the way sociologists have resisted any suggestion that their theories are "relative" (especially to philosophical ideas), claiming that their theories are "scientific" and "value-free." The assumption behind these two claims is that sociology cannot be truly scientific until it has freed itself from philosophy, and that philosophy cannot be truly philosophical until it has freed itself from belief, especially religious belief. In the Western tradition this means Christian beliefs.

Philosophy Needs a Metaphysical Framework
We have already argued that the first of these claims is fundamentally mistaken. We drew support for our argument from contemporary philosophy of science and the existence of numerous schools of

thought in sociology. A similar argument can be used to refute the claim that philosophy is autonomous with respect to religion. Indeed, if the contention from the philosophy of science that every science requires a conceptual (or metaphysical) framework can be generalized to theoretical disciplines, and if philosophy is a theoretical discipline, then philosophy also needs a conceptual framework. However, the main stream of twentieth-century philosophy has sought to avoid this suggestion in the interests of neutrality, just as the social sciences have done. Pragmatism, phenomenology, logical positivism, and linguistic analysis have largely presented themselves, not as systematic metaphysics rooted in ultimate commitments, but as *neutral methods*. Concerns with interpretation, evaluation, integration, and synthesis have been disclaimed, while a "scientific" approach involving some form of "logical analysis" or "pure description" has been proclaimed as *the* philosophical method.

Many Schools, One Method

In this context reference cannot be made to the philosophical literature, but the fact that such claims to neutrality are at least dubious, if not a complete pretense, should be evident from the fact that there are many schools of thought offering *the* neutral method. A closer examination will reveal that each of these schools is divided into subschools, each with their variants on *the* method. It is very hard not to see these various schools of philosophy as guided by various pre-theoretical commitments (Gellner, 1963; Pivcevic, 1970). *Perhaps the deepest irony of the situation is that while philosophy has been progressively restricting its field and methods in order to appear "neutral" and "scientific," the sciences themselves (including sociology) have found themselves in an ever deepening philosophical crisis.* Some sense of the chaos of modern thought is provided by Ernst Cassirer (1953). He writes, we

... have amassed an astoundingly rich and constantly increasing body of facts. Our technical instruments for observation and experimentation have become immensely improved, and our analyses have become sharper and more penetrating. We appear nevertheless, not to have found a method for the mastery and organization of this material. When compared with our abundance the past may seem very poor. But wealth of facts is not necessarily wealth of thoughts. Unless we succeed in finding a clue to Ariadne to lead us

out of this labyrinth, we can have no real insight into the real character of human culture; we shall remain lost in a mass of disconnected and disintegrated data which seem to lack all conceptual unity (1953:40-1).

In large measure this disintegration is due to the rapid growth and differentiation of knowledge without *philosophical integration*. This is clearly not a technical problem that can be solved by means of information storage and retrieval, or some more sophisticated form of computerization. The questions and disputes we are concerned with are clearly philosophical disputes that *transcend* the more limited problems with which the sciences deal. Yet, at the same time, they *define* and *structure* the sciences both with respect to their fields of investigation and method of inquiry.

Philosophical Integration Is Needed

This concern with philosophical integration is, of course, not new. It has been one of the major aims of modern secular humanist philosophy for the past four hundred years. It has produced a whole series of systems—rationalism, materialism, empiricism, idealism, historicism, and evolutionism—all of which have provided integration at the price of reductionism. Each has taken one or two aspects of the creation-order and has attempted to give an account of everything in terms of them. Each one sounded plausible enough at the beginning, but in the end, if consistently developed, resembled a *reductio ad absurdum*. Each school of thought provoked another which advocated that previously omitted aspects were to be regarded as the key to knowledge.

Again, Humanism or Christianity?

At the end of his book, *The Age of Complexity*, the American philosopher Herbert Kohl concludes his survey of contemporary philosophy with these words:

There is no single explanation of all phenomena, no single characterization of language, and most of all, no one point of view from which man "must" be considered. Throughout my text there has been no mention of God or religion. ... Philosophy, insofar as it considers the actual lives men lead these days, must consider life lived without divine guidance or grace. Life has become too com-

plex for simple answers; hence philosophy insofar as it is modern does not consider religion an issue. . . . Life does not have a single great question with a single answer but questions and answers (1965:271).

Let me make three comments on this passage. First, while saying that there is no one point of view from which man must be considered, Kohl immediately proceeds to dismiss any alternatives to his own commitment to modern humanism. Similarly, while saying that life does not have a single answer, he is insistent that the only acceptable answer is what in his terminology he calls a "philosophy of complexity and disillusionment."

Secondly, Kohl seems to be haunted by the memory of an alternative unification—one provided by the Christian religion (instead of secular humanism). Christians view man as the servant of God, finding life through divine guidance and grace. He dismisses Christianity because it is inconsistent with his own disillusioned humanism. The reason he offers is interesting. He thinks that life has become too complex for simple answers. Is Christianity a "simple answer"? It may be that the Christianity Kohl encountered was so reduced and compromised that he concluded that it could not provide the intellectual unification and hope needed to answer the complex problems and disillusionment of the modern world. One further comment on the ambiguity of the phrase "simple answer." It can mean "simplistic," or it can mean "basic" or "foundational"—just as "single great question" can be poking fun at something pompous and pretentious, or it can refer to a question the answer of which determines the direction of all subsequent questioning. Kohl trades on this ambiguity. He is clearly conducting a strategic retreat on behavior of humanism which involves a scorched-earth policy. In short, if humanism cannot find any integration in our complex world, then there is no integration to be found. To think otherwise is to engage in fantasy.

To summarize, we have found that no serious case has been made for either the autonomy of the sciences (including sociology), or for philosophy. Furthermore, the anarchy of the various sciences with their diverse schools of thought cannot be helped by humanist philosophy, for it shares, and is part of, the same problem. Indeed, the fragmentation of contemporary scholarship is due to the fragmentation of humanist philosophy underlying it. As modern humanism declines, its highest wisdom seems to be that we should reconcile ourselves with

"complexity." This seems little short of intellectual chaos—or expressed existentially, "meaninglessness."

A Call for Openness

Let us now put together the two stages of our argument. If sociology cannot be philosophically neutral, and if philosophy cannot be religiously neutral, then we may draw two implications.

What Are the Presuppositions?

First, if sociology is to be *critical* instead of dogmatic, then it must clearly state the philosophical and religious presuppositions that provide its structure and control its development. This reverses the usual formulation inspired by positivism, where a sociological perspective that has an explicit philosophical-religious orientation is dismissed as dogmatic and prejudiced—or as "social philosophy." To this idea, a good number of non-Christian sociologists will show some sympathy and might even suggest that it is slightly passe. For instance, we could mention Alvin Gouldner's paper, "Anti-Minotaur: The Myth of a Value-Free Sociology" (1963). This should not surprise us, for there are many secular humanists who are opposed to the various forms of positivism and scientism (Sorokin, 1965; Andreski, 1972).

Humanism Revised

Modern humanism since Kant has been torn between two poles— that of *autonomous science* and that of *autonomous personality* (Dooyeweerd, 1958, 1960). This has led to the existence of two antagonistic traditions within modern humanism, and a variety of attempts to arbitrate between the two poles by assigning territory to both the ideal of science and to the ideal of freedom. In that, positivism represents the primacy of the ideal of science. There have been many humanists since Kant who have wished to "limit science to make room for faith." By this they mean to limit the humanist's ideal of science in order to make room for the humanist ideal of personality with its values. All that is being proposed is a revision of humanism. *There is no concern to make room for non-humanist ideals of science and personality.*

Illiberal Humanist/Positivist Academe

The nature and content of our academic programs and textbooks

continue to show the decisive imprint of positivism. They continue to be organized as if disciplines are isolated units, as if all share the same universally valid standpoint and train towards neutral-technical professional competence, and as if controversy were marginal to the academic enterprise and would disappear as disciplines matured. Such an administrative-curricular-textbook pattern is deeply at odds with the academic realities of teaching, learning, and research. In sociology, for example, it does not take long to recognize that departments are solidly functionalist, neo-Marxist, or symbolic interactionist. Many are divided into a number of camps with open or implicit conflict between them. One soon comes to realize that he could not be "at home"—be free to be himself—if he held to a markedly different perspective. In spite of what might be said about "stimulating criticism," if scholarship is something that is centrally communal in character, then one would necessarily be intellectually isolated from his colleagues by virtue of his perspective. Furthermore, one's academic growth would be stunted by this isolation, although it might be overcome, in part, through contact with like-minded scholars in other institutions.

Teaching: With respect to teaching, there are also deep dilemmas. Positivism requires neutrality. One can teach that his perspective is the neutral perspective. The only positivist alternative is that one "neutrally" *teach about* all perspectives, concealing his own. If the earlier arguments of this chapter are correct, then there is no philosophical or religiously neutral perspective. The idea of neutral teaching is hardly less problematic. What is to be included or excluded from the syllabus and why? What will be the aim of the curriculum? How will one account for the diversity of perspectives? What will one say or insinuate about those who claim to have the exclusively correct perspective? How will one evaluate the work of students? Would they be expected to give the appearance of suspended judgment in their examinations and papers (Russell, 1979)?

The Student

In all this, the situation of the students is the most difficult, for they are the most vulnerable—especially if they try to be radically Christian and do not share the philosophical and religious perspective of their teachers. Most of them realize they are not in a position or equipped to dissent, and will play along with what is required, never becoming existentially involved. Their motivation will almost

necessarily be reduced to an extrinsic concern, passing exams. This alienation from academic inquiry may well stay with them for life, making them pragmatic and unreflective. Those who do dissent are likely to pay a heavy price. Not only will they have to keep up with the requirements of the program, but they will have to work much harder to present cogent criticism of the ruling departmental perspective and work at the discipline from their own philosophic-religious perspective.

Lack of Community in Academe

In short, within the present positivist dominated institutional framework there seems to be no way to take seriously the academic freedom of the researcher, teacher, and student, and the communal character of scholarship. This freedom cannot be conceived of in an individualistic manner, but is a matter of working along with those who share a common perspective. The academic reality is that there are two intellectual "communities" in which one participates. The one composed of those with whom one shares an interest in the same discipline, and another of those whose main interest is different but with whom one shares a similar philosophical and religious perspective. Our present departmental organization only recognizes the first community, though there are reasons to think that the second involves a much deeper sense of community. Those who belong to the various communities in this sense could perhaps be served best by a series of research institutes based on campus. In the meantime there is no reason why Christian students and lecturers should not unofficially initiate such an "institute"—a university within a contemporary university. The aim of such an institute would be a Christian academic witness. It would involve the critique of non-Christian perspectives and the construction of Christian alternatives.

Shared Perspective Is Essential

A final point is that this arrangement would best facilitate the concern that exists for interdisciplinary integration. If the general argument of our paper is sound, then there is no possibility of genuine integration between disciplines that lack a shared philosophical perspective—a necessary prerequisite for academic communication and community. Attempts at integration and communication between disciplines which are themselves philosophically fragmented is a hopeless venture. It is far better to build on shared philosophical foundations

with the plurality of integrations it offers. If one does not, attempts at unification will inevitably fail, pushing the academic enterprise into further fragmentation and more academics into that form of intellectual suicide known as dedicated specialism. Those who seriously wish to oppose this gentle pluralization of academic institutions ought to consider carefully the philosophical presuppositions of the "unity" they wish to retain. Should those who do not share such presuppositions have the institutional and academic consequences of them forced upon them? Doubtless the proposed pluralization might give administrators a few headaches, but perhaps this is what they are paid for as servants of the academic community.

Christians Must Break Clean of Humanism

We now turn to the second implication of our main argument. If sociology cannot escape the control of philosophical and religious presuppositions, then it is mandatory for Christians to break with sociological perspectives with non-Christian presuppositions. If Wallace is correct, this means a break with all the major contemporary perspective, for he maintained that they had all made a choice in their foundations between the freedom and determinism, and between materialism and idealism. This is a choice between the humanist ideal of personality and science in terms of the first alternative, and between two forms of non-Christian ontology (idealism and materialism) in the second. That all these alternatives are between different types of secular humanism is hardly surprising, for the founding fathers of sociology—Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Marx, and Weber—offer us nothing else. Each was quite explicit about his rejection and interpretation of the Christian religion. Nor has Christianity had any subsequent impact on the sociological tradition. The nature of the contemporary scene is clear enough. Wallace writes in the preface of his book on theory:

> I am not concerned in this book with all sociological theories that anyone might ever have dreamed of (for example, supernatural theories of social life are left out), but only with those that have achieved a relatively high degree of formalization and explicit expression in "the sociological literature"—and indeed, only with the most widely and currently influential of these theories (1969:viii).

Many Christians are not willing to break decisively with the secularist

presuppositions of the sociological community—especially those who have been socialized into that community and for whom being a sociologist constitutes a significant part of their identity. Sometimes their interpretation of the Christian religion is adjusted so that no break is required. Sometimes they will maintain that sociology has no such presuppositions, that it is neutral. As we have already argued, this positivist claim is very dubious from both a biblical and epistemological standpoint. Sometimes they feel the claim to be eclectic is a sufficient break, as long as one is not a member of one particular school of thought.

The appeal of eclecticism is that it seems to be the only way to save being boxed in by highly reductionistic schools of thought, while at the same time recognizing aspects of reality that one does not wish to ignore. But there are two crucial points that cannot be avoided. The first is that unless one's selection of concepts, theories, and methods from other positions is purely arbitrary, then one is guided by criteria which are presumably mutually consistent. It is hard to see how this can differ from being a member of a school of thought, except that this school might have only one member and would inevitably be underdeveloped—at least at first. The second point is that the term eclectic suggests purely personal choices, whereas if it is a Christian perspective that guides the choices, then it would be better to say so. However, to put the matter like that is not fully adequate either. In my opinion, a Christian eclecticism mistakenly assumes that all the materials necessary for a Christian sociological perspective already exist in the humanistic sociological literature, and that one can simply select and remove concepts and theories from other perspectives. The assumption is that they are bricks from which one can proceed to build his Christian theoretical edifice. We have already suggested that a theoretical perspective is not like a pile of bricks, but is far more integrated and interconnected. It is like a tree with religious roots, a philosophical trunk, the sciences as branches, and theories as twigs.

Borrowing Working Hypotheses and Methodologies

In addition to reinterpreting Christianity, positivism, and eclecticism, there is one final method of making peace with the world of secularized sociological perspectives. This is to claim that one has only taken over assumptions from these perspectives as "working hypotheses" or as "purely methodological" tools, or simply that one

finds them "useful."° Sometimes these glib phrases are used to disclaim responsibility for one's intellectual commitments or to evade answering serious criticism. If something better lies behind these phrases, then the individual should be willing to submit to interrogation and justify his commitment to a theory, theories, or research program. One might ask, why work with this hypothesis? Why does it work? Why adopt this methodology? What would lead you to adopt another methodology? What assumptions about the nature of social reality does this methodology presume, and what grounds are there for making that presumption? The word "useful" volunteers even less information, so that one cannot but ask, useful for what purpose? Are those purposes justified?

The Consequences of Not Breaking with Humanism

Our general conclusion is that these and other strategies used by Christian sociologists to try to avoid making a decisive break with the secular presuppositions of the sociological community will not stand up to serious examination. One reason for not wanting to make this break may be that only the cost of the break has been considered. One should also consider the consequences of *not* making the break. Some of the consequences are as follows:

It Divides the Body of Christ

It leads to the breaking of the church, the body of Christ, in terms of the divisions that non-Christian sociologists have among themselves. Sadly this is not a new phenomenon. Much of the history of theology itself is a history of synthesis with non-Christian philosophies running from neo-platonism to existentialism, linguistic analysis, process philosophy, and neo-marxism in our own day. It presents the pathetic spectacle of Christian theologians scrambling to get in line with the

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°These evasive phrases were naturally much utilized by the logical positivists in order to give the appearance of not holding any substantive philosophical positions. They spoke of "methodological materialism," "methodological behaviorism," and even "methodological solipsism" ... but one suspects that they would not have tolerated "methodological idealism" or "methodological mentalism." Some contemporary sociologists have suggested that the sociology of religion should operate on the basis of "methodological atheism." If this atheism is as purely methodological as they insist, then they should have no problems with other sociologists opting for "methodological theism" instead.

"assured results of modern thought." By the time they have gotten in line, "modern thought" has restlessly moved on again, leaving the Christian *avant-garde* not only defending already obsolete ideas, but propagating them in congregations who have not quite absorbed the ideas from the previous era of synthesis. One listens in vain for any complaint that the Christians "have turned the world of philosophical or sociological scholarship upside down." All this serves to confirm the sense of victory that secular humanism has over the Christian faith.

We Are Under Judgment

To the extent that we synthesize with non-Christian sociological thought, we will share in its crisis. More pointedly, we will share its judgment—judgment in that all thought not submitted to the obedience of Christ eventually suffers. However, having synthesized with the sociological establishment we are more likely to be apologists for that establishment, rather than prophets calling it to repentance and renewal.

We Neglect Our Evangelical and Prophetic Roles

If we do not see the vanity of secularized scholarship, then we will not understand that the gospel of the kingdom of God is good news for scholarship in all of its many fields and institutional dimensions. If these expressions sound strange and even bizarre, perhaps we should ask if this is because we view the university as the "temple of the unfallen intellect of man and as the true light of modern culture." Perhaps we have a little too much reverence for the modern university, symbolized by the fact that many ministers in Britain wear their university hoods during services—as if that qualifies them to lead the Christian community. Historically, this reverence is not difficult to understand, for until relatively recently most of higher education was church controlled. In addition it is difficult to be critical of an institution from which one derives status and distinction and, even more crucially, one's intellectual formation. We are called to evaluate that intellectual formation and to spiritually discern the religious dynamics that have made it what it is. If we have really grasped that academic institutions, traditions, disciplines, theories, and concepts can never be religiously neutral, then the following words of Paul will speak concretely to us. But if we have not, then they will restrict us to "values," "moral outlook," and "pious platitudes."

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2, NIV.

As Christian scholars our central task can be none other than discovering and manifesting the genuine liberating power of the gospel for scholarship.

Ideas Do Have Consequences

We should never underestimate the power of scholarship, or fail to recognize that ideas have consequences. Karl Marx spent years of his life writing and researching in the British Museum library. You can read about the consequences of those ideas in any newspaper, any day, in any country of the world. John Maynard Keynes, perhaps the most influential economist of the twentieth century, ended his *General Theory* (1936) with this statement: "... the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist."

In our own day the social sciences clearly play a significant role in shaping contemporary society—in legislation, industrial relations, management practices, the administration of law and justice, education, and welfare services. Their power has a twofold source. On the one hand, being "scientific," they are taken to be quite unproblematically reliable and unprejudiced by the decision-makers who claim to base their decisions on them. They in turn claim, that since their decisions are based on "scientific" research, they are the only ones possible. Policy, so we are led to believe, is determined by the facts, so that any dispute about values or ideologies is now obsolete.

On the other hand, there is a second indirect source of influence that, in the long run, is far more powerful—the sociological perspective. The first source has been subjected to considerable criticism. Frequently it is suggested that there is a gap between "facts" and "social policy," and "is" and "ought." According to positivism there is no "logical" way of crossing this gap: no social fact has any policy implications whatever without the introduction of normative principles. Such criticism, however, tends to be superficial and ineffective because

it fails to realize that *a perspective* lies behind sociological facts and theories, as much as it does behind social policies and values. The theory *defines* the situation, its necessities, possibilities, probabilities, and impossibilities. Different sociological perspectives do this in often radically different ways.

Once you have accepted a "description" of the situation, certain "prescriptions" seem more or less inevitable (Olthuis, 1969; 1975). In a nutshell it means that if Christians accept "descriptions" of contemporary society that are rooted in a humanist sociological perspective, then any attempt to develop integrally Christian social and political policies by appeal to Christian principles or values will be impossible. One cannot get Christian policies by adding "Christian values" to functionalist or Marxist "descriptions." At present virtually all the "descriptions" we have available are from different humanist perspectives. Consequently this is also true of almost all social and political causes, and it will continue to be true until we have developed an analysis of contemporary society from a Christian perspective (Storkey, 1979).

Needed, a New Reformation

The task before us is nothing other than the reformation of the sociological tradition as part of the larger task of the Christian reformation of scholarship (Runner, 1979). But where do we start with this? In the first place, if we had not previously recognized the possibility and necessity of such a reformation, then it is highly likely that our worldview has been dualistic. One that has profoundly restricted the meaning of Christian faith and obedience. Consequently we need to recapture the cosmic significance of creation, fall, and redemption in Jesus Christ, and glimpse the possibility of making every sociological theory subject to the obedience of Christ. Second, as we have seen, such a world view needs theoretical articulation to provide a new ontological and epistemological foundation for sociology. In short, we stand in need of a Christian systematic philosophy. It may come as a surprise, but considerable work has been done by Herman Dooyeweerd on the development of such a philosophy, one with a Christocentric worldview and deeply concerned with the reformation of the sciences, including sociology (1958). While the reformation of scholarship that Dooyeweerd proposes is extensive, any serious attempt to develop a comprehensive Christian sociological perspective and theory must include this thought.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the dichotomy that "science" imposes on human thought? What does Russell see as the critical issue?

2. What is the tradition that lies behind both sociology and philosophy? Consult a philosophy book if need be and identify the basic assumptions and tenets of this tradition. How do they agree/disagree with those of Christianity?

3. Why does Russell believe there is no opposition to secular humanism in universities today? Is this true at your college or university?

4. What philosophy does sociology identify with and why does Russell object to it? What are his arguments against it?

5. How do Martindale and Wallace seek to explain the various sociological schools of thought? How does each try to integrate them, if at all?

6. What "religious assumptions" lie behind the various philosophical schools? Why does Russell believe that philosophy cannot integrate itself?

7. What problems exist in the modern university that hinder students from developing their full intellectual potential? What alternatives does Russell suggest?

8. Do you agree with Russell's position that a Christian cannot build an eclectic system, drawing "bricks" from non-Christian perspectives and models? Discuss—why, why not?

9. What consequences does a Christian suffer if he does not make a clean break with secular humanism and develop his own unique Christian perspective?

10. Is it realistic to assume that Christians can agree on a single sociological or philosophical perspective? Should this be our goal? Why, why not?

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