

aim to offer value-free judgments to give politicians, bureaucrats, and voters the accurate knowledge of circumstances required to make good policies. Theoretically, Weber also believed that values cannot be derived from facts; in this regard, he follows David Hume's (1711–1776) argument in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748). Weber's practical and philosophical reasons for value neutrality rest on epistemological assumptions, several of which have been denied by philosophers of social science from the Critical school of thought. Critical philosophers of social science attempt to show hidden partisanship in those social scientific methods that they call FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS.

The assumption of Weber's practical argument is that social scientific research can be conducted in a purely descriptive way. The value-freedom that Weber seeks, however, involves tradeoffs, because theories can be more or less explanatory, simple, or predictive of future events. The choice of theory and the categorization of facts in terms of those theories are both value judgments, and both support certain values. The assumption of Weber's philosophical argument is that MORAL JUDGMENT is known by irrational feelings that are subjective in character. Weber is correct according to the impoverished epistemology of Hume, who argued that only sense impressions are basic and can be described as facts. However, with an epistemology that admits of knowledge of essences, moral judgments can be described as BRUTE FACTS; the goodness and badness of actions are then logically tied to the actualization of the essence of the being doing the action.

SEE ALSO SOCIAL SCIENCES.

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SOCIAL SCIENCES

The social sciences comprise those disciplines of modern science that study human BEHAVIOR in its social and cultural aspects. They are distinguished from the NATURAL SCIENCES by a focus on voluntary human action or behavior and from the humanities by the use of scientific method. Most universities follow this three-fold classification of humanities (or arts), social sciences, and natural sciences in the institutional arrangement of their academic departments. The social sciences also form one category of a typology that classifies the sciences into the formal sciences, physical sciences, life sciences, social sciences, and applied sciences.

No clear agreement has been reached on the disciplines that comprise the social sciences. Almost always included are sociology, economics, PSYCHOLOGY, political science, and cultural anthropology. History is frequently considered a social science, but most historians regard history as one of the humanities. Many newly emerging academic fields, such as international relations, public policy, and media studies, also consider themselves social sciences, as do such applied disciplines as business marketing, criminal justice, and law. The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences elects representative academics from the disciplines of law, economics, social philosophy, political sciences, sociology, and history.

The idea of an empirical science that would discover laws of human behavior analogous to those in the natural world emerged in the early nineteenth century. Auguste COMTE (1798–1857), generally credited as the first modern social scientist, advocated a social physics that explicitly rejected metaphysical or religious truths in favor of sense experience as part of his epistemological POSITIVISM. Early applications of this perspective met with some success, particularly in the influential work of Karl MARX (1818–1883), Émile DURKHEIM (1858–1917), and Max WEBER (1864–1920). By the end of the nineteenth century, the social sciences (beginning with sociology and soon followed by economics, anthropology, and psychology) were well on their way to becoming autonomous fields of study in the modern university.

Catholic Attitude toward the Social Sciences. Since their first appearance in the early modern era the Catholic Church has expressed appreciation and encouragement for the social sciences, while at the same time rejecting as presumptuous any antireligious or materialist assumptions alleged to underly them. One of the earliest magisterial statements of these twin emphases was at VATICAN COUNCIL I (1870), which explained in *Dei filius*: “Hence, so far is the church from hindering the development of human arts and studies, that in fact she assists and promotes them in many ways. For she is neither ignorant nor contemptuous of the advantages which derive from this source for human life; rather she acknowledges that those things flow from God, the lord of sciences, and, if they are properly used, lead to God by the help of his grace. Nor does the church forbid these studies to employ, each within its own area, its own proper principles and method: but while she admits this just freedom, she takes particular care that they do not become infected with errors by conflicting with divine teaching, or, by going beyond their proper limits, intrude upon what belongs to faith and engender confusion” (3:4).

Almost a century later, Pope JOHN PAUL II restated the same principles, though in more positive terms, in the 1994 *motu proprio* accompanying the founding of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences: “Social science research (*Socialium scientiarum investigationes*) can effectively contribute to improving human relations. . . . This is why the Church, ever concerned for the good of man, has turned with growing interest to this field of scientific research in order to obtain concrete information for fulfilling the duties of her Magisterium. . . .” For “from the Gospel message reason guided by faith is able to draw decisive principles for a social order worthy of man.” The same theme, of genuine advances in concrete knowledge leading to the apprehension of higher truths about GOD and SOCIETY, is expressed in the 1998 encyclical FIDES ET RATIO: “I would urge [scientists] to continue their efforts without ever abandoning the *sapiential* horizon within which scientific and technological achievements are wedded to the philosophical and ethical values which are the distinctive and indelible mark of the human person. Scientists are well aware that ‘the search for truth, even when it concerns a finite reality of the world or of man, is never-ending, but always points beyond to something higher than the immediate object of study, to the questions which give access to Mystery’” (106). The Catholic Church therefore affirms both the value of applied social science to provide expert technical understanding of complex social issues and the possibility of a theoretical social science that operates in congruence with Church teaching and leads to a greater aware-

ness and understanding of God, that is, a Catholic social science.

History of Catholic Social Science. The Catholic Church’s relation to the social sciences follows a history of the rise, fall, and recovery of the ideal of a Catholic social science. The appearance of a distinct Catholic social doctrine, beginning with the 1891 encyclical *RE-RUM NOVARUM* (On the Condition of Labor), encouraged the development of an explicitly Catholic social science in the rapidly expanding academic departments of Catholic colleges and universities. Two emphases characterized the emerging Catholic social science: the articulation of a social vision prompted and informed by the doctrinal affirmations of the Catholic Church, especially the newly emerging tradition of Catholic social thought, and an emphasis on the practical application of social science to the solution of social problems. Fr. John Augustine RYAN (1869–1945), one of the first American Catholic social scientists to apply Catholic social thought to a specific social problem in his 1906 study *The Living Wage*, produced by 1919 a comprehensive program of Catholic social policies based on the principles of *Rerum novarum*. The Neothomistic revival in theology during this period “permitted Catholic intellectuals to chart a theologically appropriate response to their various academic disciplines” (Kivisto 1989, 351). By 1931 the encyclical *QUADRAGESIMO ANNO* (On Reconstruction of the Social Order) acclaimed that “a true Catholic social science has arisen, which is daily fostered and enriched by the tireless efforts of those chosen men whom We have termed auxiliaries of the Church” (20).

The 1930s and 1940s saw the establishment of an array of scholarly organizations devoted to a distinctive Catholic vision in most areas of the social sciences, including the AMERICAN CATHOLIC HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, the Catholic Anthropological Conference (later Association), the Catholic Economic Association, the American Catholic Sociological Society, and the American Catholic Psychological Association. Reacting to the reductionism that dominated the mainstream social sciences, Catholic social scientists were variously engaged in attempting to critique the moral RELATIVISM that resulted from the cloak of scientific OBJECTIVITY; to build a social science based on Catholic social principles; and to treat divine revelation as a source of information for social science equivalent to any other kind of data. As Fr. Paul Hanly Furfey (1896–1992), a leading Catholic sociologist, argued: “The existence of the Mystical Body is a socially significant fact and it is just as actual, just as real, just as concrete, as the infant mortality rate of Minnesota in 1939” (Furfey 1940, 167).

During this era endeavors at the intersection of social science and Catholic faith were often marginalized

in practice by social scientists who distrusted any religiously oriented approach and by Catholic leaders who distrusted the contributions of social science to Catholic social thought. The 1954 president of the American Catholic Sociological Society described as “fairly common” the attitude among Catholics “that is confident in the possession of the ultimate answers to life’s mysteries and does not see the need of seeking anxiously for the proximate answers also” (Fitzpatrick 1954, 6).

The emphasis that VATICAN COUNCIL II (1962–1965) placed on engaging the modern world more directly led to the “abandonment of the previous effort to develop ‘Catholic’ human and social sciences. Work in Catholic intellectual circles was merged—and immersed—in the strongly empirical currents of the social sciences” (McLean 2005, 1). “Catholic social science” during this era came to mean nothing more than the social scientific study of Catholic populations and institutions, a subfield of the sociology of religion. Over the next decade the array of Catholic social science organizations was rapidly dismantled. In 1964 the American Catholic Sociological Society changed the name of the premier Catholic sociological journal from *Catholic Sociology* to *Sociological Analysis*. ACSS president Paul Reiss explained at the time that the members did not want to convey the “mistaken impression” that one could discover “a distinctive Catholic sociology” (Marsden 2001, 181). Six years later the ACSS itself was reconfigured as the Association for the Sociology of Religion; the American Catholic Psychological Association reorganized in the same year as Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues.

During the 1990s, an effort to develop normatively Catholic social sciences began anew. In 1992 the SOCIETY OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (SCSS) was founded with the aim to “boldly challenge [the] secularized approach to the social sciences by combining objective scholarly analysis with fidelity to the Magisterium” (SCSS website). Two years later Pope John Paul II established the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, for the purpose (according to its constitution) of promoting “the study and progress of the social sciences, primarily economics, sociology, law and political science” so as to offer “the Church the elements which she can use in the development of her social doctrine, and reflect on the application of that doctrine in contemporary society.” In 1999 the Institute for the Psychological Sciences (IPS) opened its doors, a graduate school of psychology “dedicated to the renewal of the Catholic Christian intellectual tradition and the integration of the theoretical and empirical bases of psychology and a Catholic view of the human person” (IPS website). Furfey’s *Three Theories of Society* (1937), a central statement

of the earlier Catholic social science, was reprinted in 2005. In 2007 the Catholic Psychotherapy Association (CPA) formed with the mission of “promoting the development of psychological theory and mental health practice which encompasses a full understanding of the human person and society in communion with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church” (CPA website). Whether the new interest in a normatively Catholic social science produces a lasting theory and social program remains to be seen.

SEE ALSO SOCIAL SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY OF

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SOCIOBIOLOGY

In the poem “Andrea del Sarto” (1855), Robert Browning (1812–1889) writes that “a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, / Or what’s a heaven for.” The scientific enterprise known as sociobiology possesses the unlimited ambition to encompass all of HUMAN NATURE, behavior, and even CULTURE within its extended Darwinian grasp. In the view of its critics, however, it has not yet delivered upon its promissory note. Its significance for both personhood and ETHICS cannot be underestimated if moral judgments are to be subsumed under the mantle of evolutionary thinking.

Seeing Darwin at Every Turn. Evolutionary biology and issues of social concern were first combined in a prominent way during the nineteenth century by Herbert SPENCER (1820–1903) under the banner of SOCIAL DARWINISM. The term *sociobiology* was coined in 1946 by John Paul Scott (1909–2000) at a conference dealing with genetics and social behavior. More recently, sociobiology has achieved international recognition since the publication in 1975 of *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* by Edward O. Wilson (b. 1929). Wilson’s *On Human Nature* (1978), along with *The Selfish Gene* (1976) by Richard Dawkins (b. 1941), quickly helped to define sociobiology as a dogmatic discipline that insists that there is a biological basis to all human and animal behavior.

Sociobiological theory rejects FREEDOM OF THE WILL by extending Darwinian concepts to impute a biological DETERMINISM to all manifestations of human expression. Without freedom of the will the basis for the INTENTIONALITY of sin and our culpability for any estrangement from God are unintelligible. In a famous statement from chapter eight of *On Human Nature* Wilson characterizes sociobiology as the Rosetta Stone that can decipher the hieroglyphics of religious superstition. Of all the virtues it is CHARITY, or ALTRUISM, upon which advocates of sociobiology set their sights most assiduously. This is so since a deflation of altruism, in which self-sacrificial behavior is explained via some genetic calculus as a mere means toward the survival of those who share our genes, would undercut the cornerstone of any human propensity toward the

sacred and the selfless. Furthermore, Wilson’s skepticism concerning genuine altruism poses a challenge to the institution of the family; if humans are more disposed to display altruistic behavior to family and friends, then only a limited amount of global harmony is possible.

In *The Selfish Gene* Dawkins introduced the concept of the ‘*meme*’ as the cultural counterpart of the gene. Its function is to provide a causal mechanism for explaining human behavior and culture in a way that is analogous to how phenotypical adaptations result from the interaction between genes and the selective pressures exerted by the environment. In a similar vein Wilson endorses the causal influence of epigenetic rules. These rules channel the development of anatomical, physiological, cognitive, and behavioral traits in a particular direction, and their proponents used them to explain such human skills and behavior as color perception and the universal taboo against incest. Xenophobia, differences in gender roles, rape, and racism have all had a good deal of sociobiological ink spilled on their behalf. While sociobiology was and remains a best-selling phenomenon of popular science, it has failed to make any significant inroads into the respectable scientific establishment. The sociobiological baton has, for the most part, been passed onto the discipline of evolutionary psychology, whose practitioners have been critical of the fact that sociobiology did not sufficiently initiate any investigation into the underlying psychological causes responsible for producing the myriad effects of human behavior and culture.

Methodologically, since sociobiology assumes the truth of natural selection as a basis for the further interpretative development of human culture, beliefs, and behavior, it suffers from a double problem. Sociobiological explanations can be defective in addition to the many contested issues within Darwinian explanation. Wilson’s epigenetic rules are an invention intended to provide sociobiological explanation with a somatic basis. But as yet no evidence exists for them. In the case of altruism sociobiology relies heavily upon a genetic calculus predicated upon game theoretic calculations, in which, in some decision-theory models, degrees of cooperation and generosity depend upon the number of genes shared between individuals. This has led to MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA (1910–1997) being criticized severely on sociobiological grounds for her service to the poor and disabled. The content of many sociobiological positions, such as the explanation that justifies xenophobia on genetic grounds, is often criticized as being biased or ideologically tainted. One thing is sure: If there exists a paucity of evidence for sociobiological commitments, then non-scientific reasons would seem to be involved.