Philosophy of Social Science
The Methods, Ideals, and Politics of Social Inquiry

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The liberal ideal

What's in a name? In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and economics were known as "human" or "moral sciences"; today, of course, they are known as "social sciences." Behind the change in name is a change in the way the disciplines are practised and the way we are invited to think about them. However, the name "social science" tells us little about the change; for, as I argue in the pages that follow, given the way the moral or human sciences are now supposed to be practised and the way we are now encouraged to think about them, they would be better called "liberal" than "social" sciences. That is, these disciplines endorse ideals that are more liberal than social, in much the way that ideals espoused by institutions like the modern secular state or university are more liberal than social. Let me explain.

The split between the arts and the sciences

The term "liberal" was originally an epithet for those arts and sciences that were considered worthy of free and noble men and were suited to a life free from everyday needs and toil.¹ In the Middle Ages, the term was applied to seven branches of learning: the trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric and the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. During the Renaissance, the term was used more broadly to cover general education, as against specialized or vocational training. The vocations, professions, trades, crafts, domestic arts, and most forms of work and commerce were associated with servility and a narrow, rigid, machine-like approach to life, whereas the liberal arts and sciences were associated with generosity, flexibility, imagination, and a free and open mind. The liberal arts and sciences were thought to inspire new ideas and to lead to progress and reform, while specialized and vocational training were thought to inspire the repetition of old ideas and lead to a slavish respect for the past.

At some point, the term "liberal" lost its association with the sciences while retaining its association with the arts.² The new, exclusive tie with the arts affected attitudes towards liberalty. As art inclined toward freedom and freedom toward license, people came to see liberalty as mere laxity and indulgence. Freedom in upholding rules and standards looked more like a vice than a virtue, and in comparison to the sciences, the liberal arts seemed to lack precision, rigor, and discipline. They relied more on invention and speculation than on observation and reasoning and were pliant and yielding where the sciences were solid, firm, and exacting. While the arts remained the liberal arts, the sciences became the empirical or exact sciences. Arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy were now more closely identified with wisdom and learning than were grammar, rhetoric, and music. The sciences had become hard, while the arts had grown soft and more worthy of a self-indulgent than a noble man.

The liberal state

The term "liberal" has another use that also connotes freedom, but freedom of the will rather than freedom of the understanding or imagination. In England and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term was a label for a particular conception of the relation between the individual and the state. A state was liberal if it left its citizens free to lead their lives according to their own lights.³ Liberal principles were designed to regulate the basic institutions of the society without implying that any one member's moral or political ideals were better than any others or without taking sides on moral issues over which the members were divided.⁴

The rise of liberal thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe was a response to historical circumstances: the passing away of a shared conception of the good in the form of the world view of the Church and the breakup of the feudal order.⁵ The community of thought advanced and enforced by the Church dissolved and was replaced by a diversity of forms of life and a consciousness of self as separate from and set against the beliefs and desires of others. Rule by one on behalf of all seemed no longer possible, for there was no longer a body of common attitudes or outlooks binding all the members of society together in a single community. Liberalism was a political philosophy for a society whose members practised many religions, pursued many different occupations, and identified with many different customs and traditions. Liberal theories of the state contrast with perfectionist theories like Plato's in the Republic, Aristotle's in the Politics, and the politics of civic
virtue in Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Perfectionist principles regulate the basic institutions of a society in ways designed to reflect or advance a particular view of human perfection or the good life.6 Whereas liberal principles assume the priority of an individual's freedom to lead his life according to his own lights, perfectionist principles assume the priority of a preferred light over the freedom of the individual to choose.7 Liberal principles are designed to prohibit the state from requiring or even encouraging citizens to subscribe to one religious tradition, form of family life, or manner of personal or artistic expression over another; whereas perfectionist principles are designed to push or pull citizens in directions that reflect and sustain a particular set of values or traditions.8

The value of liberal neutrality

Liberal principles are designed to ensure value-neutrality, or neutrality between different conceptions of the good; but liberals differ as to why neutrality is necessary or appropriate. For skeptics, neutrality is necessary because there is no truth in matters of the good. On this view, there is nothing for judgments of value to be true of, and so no proper reason for the state to prefer or endorse some of these judgments over others. Liberals of the skeptical school are often noncognitivists in their interpretation of value. They believe that moral judgments have no truth-value and are expressions of feeling or personal preference rather than statements of moral fact.9

According to another school, pragmatism, neutrality is necessary because, given the differences in conceptions of the good, there is no way to win or maintain the cooperation or allegiance of the different individuals or groups within the state or social institution except by value-neutrality. Neutrality is seen as a means to earn and maintain the respect of all in a society in which differences in moral and political outlook are broad and well entrenched. Were the state to pursue a conception of the good favored by some over that favored by others, it would have a problem of winning the support and loyalty of many of its citizens.

Finally, for liberals like John Stuart Mill, neutrality is necessary in order to promote autonomy. According to this school, the good life includes the opportunity to plan one's life for oneself and "to be conscious of oneself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for his choices and able to explain them by reference to his own ideas and purposes."10 Given this conception of the good, a person cannot be forced to be good, and the state should not dictate the kind of life a citizen should lead; it would be better for citizens to choose badly than for them to be forced by the state to choose well.11 In linking liberalism and liberty with autonomy and freedom, liberals like Mill bring back the earlier link between liberalism and freedom— the idea that the liberal arts and sciences are those worthy of free men. Liberal government, on Mill's view, is government worthy of free men and designed to inspire new ideas and free, open minds.

Liberal principles assume the priority of individual liberty or autonomy over the good, but liberals differ in their conception of liberty or autonomy. For the libertarian or classical school of liberalism, liberty is no more than the absence of constraint, and an individual is at liberty to live as he chooses if no other individual or no institution compels him to live otherwise. For the egalitarian school, liberty requires opportunities and resources necessary to live as one chooses. These differing conceptions of liberty are the basis for two very different conceptions of the liberal state. According to one, the state is a night watchman whose role is to supply those public goods that cannot be efficiently supplied by a free market; whereas, according to the other, the state is a benefactor whose role is to improve the prospects of the least well-off members of society. Ronald Dworkin distinguishes between liberalism based on neutrality, which "takes as fundamental the idea that government must not take sides on moral issues and . . . supports only such egalitarian measures as can be shown to be the result of that principle," and liberalism based on equality, which "takes as fundamental the idea that government treats its citizens as equals and insists on moral neutrality only to the degree that equality requires it."12

Though liberalism is primarily a theory of the state, its principles can be applied to any of the basic institutions of a society; for one can argue that the role of the clinic, the corporation, the scholarly associations, or professions is not to dictate or even recommend the kind of life a person should aim at. Neutrality can serve as an ideal for the operations of these institutions much as it can for the state. Their role, one can argue, should be to facilitate whatever kind of life a student, patient, client, customer, or member is aiming at and not to promote one kind of life over another.

Liberalism in education

The principles of liberalism are particularly applicable to the institutions of education, for the principles that regulate schooling can be designed to advance one view of a good and meaningful life at the expense of others or to be indifferent between the various views. The ideal of liberal education carries the ideals of the liberal state into the schools, where
it limits the schools to informing students about the different views of the good and teaching them the facts, skills, and techniques required to successfully pursue them. On the liberal view, as Amy Gutmann writes in her book *Democratic Education*:

Schools should teach the capacity for moral reasoning and choice without predisposing children toward any given conception of the good life or toward a particular moral character (aside from one defined by this capacity). Just as a liberal state must leave its adult citizens free to choose their own “good” life, so must its schools leave children free to choose their own values. If public schools predisposed children towards a particular way of life by educating them as children, the professed neutrality of the liberal state would be a cover for the bias of its educational system.

The choice between views is to be left to the students or their families; whereas the choice between facts, skills, and techniques is to be left to the schools and to the professionals who run them.

The ideals of liberal education complement and reinforce those of the liberal state. The liberal state permits both liberal and parochial education but does not endorse any one parochial school over another. When the liberal state finances or administers schooling through a system of public education, the schools are based on liberal principles and are designed to be silent on questions of religious and moral value, or at least on questions over which the community is sharply divided. The liberal state tolerates partisan education, but any education offered by the state is committed to the ideals of political neutrality and nonpartisanship.

**Liberalism in science**

Liberalism is also applicable to the institutions of science and, in particular, to the social sciences. The rise of the social sciences, as many historians have noted, overlaps the rise of the liberal state. The dream of philosophers in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was to bring the methods of experimental reasoning — the methods that had proved so successful in the study of nature — to the study of “man” and society. Behind that dream was the belief that knowledge in the social sciences would further the growth of the liberal state and enable every citizen to perfect and advance his own life according to his own plans. Though the state was not to promote one plan or project over another, it was to promote the mastery of those facts, skills, and techniques required by every project, and the social sciences were thought to offer such a mastery. Citizens were to supply the ends, and the social sciences, with the support of the state and the schools, were to supply the know-how or means for achieving them.

The liberal ideal of neutrality was shared by the state, the schools, and the social sciences. The social sciences, it was thought, should not favor or advance one conception of the good over any other, any more than the state or the public schools should. Because questions about the good were thought to lie outside the sciences, the social sciences were expected to remain silent on questions or disputes concerning ultimate moral values.

Science does not attempt to formulate the end which social and moral conduct ought to pursue.

Science as such, is nonmoral. There is nothing in scientific work, as such, which dictates to what ends the products of science shall be used.

Economics deals with ascertainable facts; ethics with valuations and obligations. The two fields of enquiry are not on the same plane of discourse. Between the generalizations of positive and normative studies there is a logical gulf fixed which no ingenuity can disguise and juxtaposition in space or time bridge over.

The social sciences were to speak to questions of means, for these are matters of fact for which science can be expected to provide an answer, but were to remain silent on questions of ends, for these are best left to the subjects or clients of the science to decide.

While the arts were allowed to advance a conception of the good life, the sciences were forbidden to. The sciences were to be limited to statements of what is, whereas the arts could express ideals of what morally or politically ought to be. The division of labor between the sciences and the arts in the liberal state is described by Mill in an essay on the methods to be used in doing political economy:

Science is a collection of truths; art a body of rules, or directions for conduct. The language of science is, This is, or, This is not; This does, or does not, happen. The language of art is, Do this; Avoid that. Science takes cognisance of a phenomenon, and endeavors to discover its law; art proposes to itself an end, and looks for means to effect it.
While the sciences, on Mill's view, should be limited to an objective and disinterested pursuit of the truth, the arts should have an ethical dimension, engage in partisan proselytizing, and promote one view of the good life over another.21

I call the social sciences "liberal" because the dominant view of social scientists is that they ought to be silent on questions of the good, and silent for many of the same reasons that liberal political theorists believe the state and the schools should be silent: namely, that different subjects have different conceptions of the good and that, like the state and the schools, social science can offer no good or persuasive reason for preferring one conception to another or would be imprudent to try.22

Without endorsing any of the competing conceptions, the social sciences, like the state and the schools, are supposed to benefit or assist their subjects and clients; they are supposed to offer instruments that are suited for use in achieving the good life no matter how it is conceived.

Have scientists, then, no special function or obligation in determining the ends for which scientific knowledge is to be used? As scientists, it is their business to determine reliably the immediate and remote costs and consequences of alternate possible courses of action, and to make these known to the public.23

The liberal state is forbidden to use the law; the liberal schools are forbidden to use the classroom or curriculum; and the liberal social sciences are forbidden to use teaching or research to endorse one conception of the good over another. Their function is to provide citizens, students, subjects, or clients with the opportunity or capacity to pursue their own life plans or projects but to leave the choice of plans or projects to them to decide. The social sciences and social scientific expertise, according to the liberal ideal, should inform public policy and direct the liberal state in its efforts to support its citizens in their pursuit of their visions of the good life, but they should not, any more than should the state, endorse one vision and condemn the others.24

Liberal science in comparison with the liberal state

Besides value-neutrality, the social sciences share other ideals with the liberal state. Methods in the social sciences must be objective. Observations must be free of bias, and the choice of theories must be unaffected by personal taste or prejudice. The standards of science must be administered with an even hand and without any hint of favoritism. The practice must be disinterested and concerned only with the truth. The practice of government, on the liberal view, must be equally disinterested. The methods used in administering and enforcing the laws and policies adopted by the state must be objective; the personal or political views of state officials — for example, judges, tax assessors, and bank regulators — must not be allowed to influence how they enforce the laws or apply the policies. The prosecution of justice under the law must be unbiased; the law must be executed with an even hand; the interests and claims of citizens must be considered without any hint of favoritism. The practice of government must be answerable only to fairness and the rule of law, just as the practice of social science must be answerable only to the standards of reliable and valid data and the rules of scientific reasoning.

In addition, the liberal sciences and the liberal state both rest on a distinction between popular authority and professional expertise. On the liberal view, society is composed of two realms: the public and the private. The legitimate interests of the state are limited to the public realm — to the area in which the actions of one person violate the rights or undermine the autonomy of others; but a distinction is drawn in the public realm between issues best left to popular authority — to be decided or influenced by citizens through public hearings, elections, or other expressions of public opinion — and issues best left to experts. Questions of means — how best to accomplish some popular objective — and matters concerning the enforcement of laws, management of programs, or administration of policies are reserved for professionals or people with publicly recognized expertise, and only questions of ends are reserved for the public to debate or decide.

A similar distinction is drawn in research in the social sciences. The conduct of research is to be left to the experts, while the direction and application or use of the research findings are to be left to ordinary men and women to decide. Untutored opinion can influence the problems studied, but only the experts, those trained in the methods of the sciences, can choose the techniques and tools with which to study them. The experts decide whether the findings are valid, and laymen whether and how to use them. In both the liberal practice of science and the liberal practice of government, matters of ends are left to popular authority and matters of means to people with special training or know-how.25 The liberal sciences, like the liberal state, reflect a pervasive feature of modern life: the rise of professionalization and the division of labor into labor for experts and labor for the popular will.26 So, for example, questions of whether a lower birthrate, an increase in employment, or a decrease in the rate of divorce is desirable are left to those on the street — to anyone who knows what she wants — to answer; whereas questions of how to
secure such changes are assigned to scholars who have knowledge of the mechanisms of the market or the family.

As with the liberal philosophy of the state, there are three schools of liberalism in the social sciences: skeptical, pragmatic, and autonomous. Many social scientists believe that the social sciences should be regulated by liberal principles and remain silent on issues of morality or politics, because they believe that the aim of science is the discovery of truth and that there are no moral truths to discover. Max Weber's principle reason for maintaining that the social sciences should be free of judgments of moral and political value, for example, was his moral skepticism.27

Even such simple questions as the extent to which an end should sanction unavoidable means, or the extent to which undesired repercussions should be taken into consideration, or how conflicts between several concretely conflicting ends are to be arbitrated are entirely matters of choice or compromise. There are no (rational or empirical) scientific procedures of any kind whatsoever which can provide us with a decision here.28

Weber also supported value-freedom for pragmatic reasons. He believed that the social sciences could not win support from the state and from a wide audience of citizens or bureaucrats if they included political judgments along with the findings of their research.29

Most social scientists today defend value-neutrality in the social sciences. Some are moral skeptics and believe that science cannot discover what is good or meaningful in life, because reason cannot decide questions of the good. Thus Robbins writes: "If we disagree about ends it is a case of 'thy blood or mine - live and let live,' according to the importance of the difference, or the relative strength of our opponents. But, if we disagree about means, then scientific analysis can often help us to resolve our differences."30 Social science, on this view, like the natural sciences, is concerned only with the discovery of truth, and there is no truth concerning ends, according to the moral skeptic.

Other social scientists are pragmatists. They believe that there is enough for science to do without taking on questions of value and that the social sciences will better enhance their credibility and authority if they leave such questions alone. They believe that progress in the social sciences depends on support and trust from competing interests within the surrounding community and assume that such support and trust are more likely to be achieved and maintained if the sciences are silent on questions of moral and political value.

Finally, some social scientists advocate neutrality out of concern for the autonomy of the individuals or groups they are hoping to serve. They are committed to a conception of the good life according to which the choice of ends ought to be left to the clients or subjects and not given over to their science to decide. The social sciences, as they see it, should encourage, or at least respect, the autonomy of the individuals they are designed to observe and understand. They should treat them as thinking, willing, active beings who bear responsibility for their choices and are free to choose their own life plans.

Not every argument for a neutral state is equally an argument for a neutral science. For example, one argument for neutrality in government is that the all-embracing authority of the state makes it an inappropriate institution through which to rank or favor a conception of the good life. Though the social sciences have considerable authority in most modern societies, they do not have the coercive power of the state, and an illiberal science is less threatening to those who do not share its conception of human perfection than an illiberal state. Similarly, not every argument for a neutral science is equally an argument for neutrality in government. For example, one argument for neutrality in science is that the methods of science do not provide a basis on which to rank or favor one conception over another. Though this view of the methods of science is debatable, there is no question but that governments have the methods to rank and favor conceptions of the good. A democratic form of government can favor a conception of the good preferred by a majority of its citizens, and a dictatorship can favor one preferred by the dictator.

The view that science should be value-neutral predates the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the rise of liberal thought. As Jürgen Habermas points out in Knowledge and Human Interests, the ideal of value-neutrality can be traced to accounts in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy of the nature and importance of theoretical thought - that is, theoría - or of a disinterested contemplation of the nature of things free from the contingencies of history or human interest.31 But the ideal of a social science - an inquiry into the nature of society and social life which is independent of human interests - is more recent and emerges as part of the liberal project of fashioning the basic institutions of society to skirt differences in moral outlook and of employing the method of experimental reasoning to the study of social life. The idea that the study of nature should be limited to questions of truth and fact and be free of all considerations of what is morally or politically desirable is old, but the idea that the study of the moral or social world should be so limited is new and part of our modern era and our increasing moral and political skepticism or our elevation of freedom from institutional authority over other moral and political values.
Partisanship in the social sciences

Many political theorists have argued that the state cannot be totally neutral or avoid advancing or supporting some of its citizens’ projects over others or influencing its citizens’ views of what is morally good or politically valuable. Their arguments do not show that neutrality is inappropriate as an ideal for the state, only that neutrality can only be an ideal. My thesis in this book is that neutrality is not even appropriate as an ideal for the social sciences; for the arguments for neutrality are more compelling when applied to the conduct of the state than to that of the sciences, and partisanship is required by the norms of the sciences, but not by the laws of the state. As a result, many of the virtues that liberalism offers as a philosophy for government, it loses as a philosophy for science.

I believe that social scientists have told themselves and their subjects a false story about the relation between science and politics, and although the story serves a purpose — namely, in supporting the scientists’ claims of disinterestedness and objectivity — it offers a misleading picture of the nature of social inquiry. My aim is to question liberalism as a philosophy for the social sciences and to show how the practice of social science favors some policy objectives and ends over others. I don’t maintain that there is a single agenda or view of the good life advanced by all of the liberal sciences — a single way in which the various social sciences are partisan — but only that every bit of research and teaching in each social science is partisan on some matter of moral or political value. Though all the sciences assume or advance some politics, I don’t believe, as some critics do, that there is some politics that is assumed or advanced by all. The many values that color the many social sciences are, in my view, less a motif than a motley — a ragbag of cultural, racial, religious, sexual, and economic allegiances and loyalties.

A central idea in the social sciences is that social life should be studied at two levels: the level of the individual agent and the level of the social organization or structure within which the agent perceives, thinks about, or acts on the world. Surprisingly, many studies of value-neutrality in the social sciences look solely at the individual level. Weber, for example, was concerned with the teaching and writing of individual social scientists and not with the organization of the classrooms, laboratories, libraries, journals, and publishing houses in which the teaching or research takes place or is disseminated. He admonished his colleagues not to include statements of value in their scientific lectures and articles but did not consider how the organization of a university, lecture series, journal, textbook, curriculum, department, or professional association could assume the values of the larger, surrounding political community.

Most discussions of value-neutrality are at the level of the social scientists’ choices of what to speak or write and how to speak or write it. If their speech or writing does not contain any overtly evaluative words, their science is thought to be value-neutral. Arthur Pigou had the individual perspective in mind when he wrote of the value-neutral economist:

Their effort, though it may well be roused to action by the emotions, itself necessarily lies within the sphere of the intellect. Resentment at the evils investigated must be controlled, lest it militate against scientific exactitude in our study of their causes. Pity however sincere and grief however real are here intruders to be driven ruthlessly away. Stirred by their appeal we have entered the temple of science. Against them its doors are closed, and they must remain for our return.

What Pigou did not consider seriously enough is whether the intruders, the threats to scientific exactitude, are not so much brought into the temple of science by the economists who worship there as built into the architecture of the temple — into its altar, tabernacle, and pews. Economists can leave their own values outside the door, but once inside, they will encounter windows, walls, floors, and furnishings that reflect the values of many generations of congregants. No matter how free of values their own words, values are embedded in the pulpit from which they speak and the altar at which the daily service is conducted.

The issue of value-neutrality in economics or any other social science parallels the issue of race or sex discrimination in schooling, employment, or the law. There are a number of different, distinctive ways in which our legal system can discriminate on the basis of race or sex. The least controversial and easiest to identify is overt, intentional discrimination. Here the law or a legal institution explicitly takes the race or sex of a person into account in assigning opportunities, privileges, rewards, and penalties, and by intention the law is not neutral on the value of the person’s race or sex. Racial discrimination was the intention behind the laws that enforced racial segregation in the United States until the Supreme Court began to overturn them 40 years ago. Laws that denied black Americans the vote, property ownership, or schooling intentionally discriminated against them and placed a low value on their lives or life plans.

Overt, intentional legal discrimination against black Americans is mostly behind us, but legal discrimination continues in many covert or unintentional forms. These are what people have in mind when they talk about institutional racism. De facto segregation is the most familiar example of institutional racism. In school districts where there is no intention to
discriminate among students on grounds of race, school attendance districts based on housing will lead to racial segregation of the schools if there is intentional racial discrimination in housing or if race is a major determinant of income and housing is segregated by income. The system of neighborhood schools passes on to the schools racial discrimination in the housing or labor markets, and even if neutral on the matter of race at the level of the intention of teachers and school administrators, is not neutral at the level of actual schooling.

The jury system offers another example of institutional racism. The law prohibits the intentional exclusion of black citizens from juries, but it permits a race-neutral jury selection process that can, and in mostly white jurisdictions often does, lead to all-white juries. When there is widespread racial prejudice, black defendants face an unfair jury trial from the race-neutral selection process, for the process, like the race-neutral school selection process in the case of de facto school segregation, passes the racial prejudice and bias of the surrounding community on to the courtrooms. School or court officials need not intend any racial bias, and they can be scrupulous in keeping any of their own racial prejudices from influencing their work. Nevertheless, the system they administer is partisan on issues of race; for it is biased in the schooling provided to black children or the justice provided to black adults.

The least controversial way that the social sciences can fail to be value-neutral and the easiest to identify is overt, intentional partisanship. Here social scientists include judgments of moral or political value in their teaching or research. By intention their work is not neutral on questions of the good life, for they have chosen to use words that clearly favor one stand on some moral or political issue over others. Weber's call for value-freedom in the social sciences was to eliminate overt forms of partisanship. Nazi social science is an example of overt, intentional non-neutrality. Promoting the ideal of Aryan superiority was the intention behind much of the psychological and sociological research conducted by Nazi social scientists, and judgments of superiority were included in their "scholarly" lectures and publications.

Overt, intentional partisanship in research in the social sciences is rarer today, as a result of Weber's influence and the continuing campaign to hold science above politics; but partisanship continues in a number of covert or unintentional forms. I have these in mind when I speak of institutional partisanship or the values built in to the altar or tabernacle of the temple. For example, with de jure partisanship in favor of heterosexual marriage over homosexual partnerships, social scientists say that one is good and the other bad or include their moral estimate of these relationships in their studies of domestic life. With de facto partisanship, on the other hand, social scientists hold their own moral judgments back but pass on those of their subjects by sorting their data into categories like married, unmarried, widowed, or divorced rather than into more inclusive categories like domestic partners, single, survivor of a domestic partner or former domestic partner.

Social scientists, as I explain in chapters 6 and 7, attempt to avoid partisanship in collecting and sorting their data by holding back their own values from their practice, but the norms or standards they employ in collecting and sorting pass the values of their subjects or clients to their data and into their categories. Though their work may be free of any intentional or de jure partisanship, it is not free of institutional or de facto partisanship, and the latter is as great a threat to liberal neutrality as the former.

Liberalism and academic freedom

The liberal ideals of value-neutrality in the social sciences and the schools are mutually supporting. The social sciences offer theories of liberal or value-neutral education or learning that are a basis for the organization of the classroom, the design of the curriculum, and the management of the schools. According to these theories, the schools can teach about values without promoting or endorsing them and talk about religious worship, marriage and divorce, sexuality, birth control, patriotism and civil disobedience, wealth and poverty, and mental illness or physical disability without being partisan. In addition, the liberal sciences are included in the curriculum of liberal education, and most of what students learn in school about the social world they learn through their instruction in these sciences. Finally, the sites of most research in the liberal sciences are institutions of higher learning, and in some of these sciences the theories that develop are tested in primary or secondary schools. Students are often experimental subjects for theories of intellectual and emotional development in psychology, for example, and the theories, once tested, are used by the schools to affect the students' development.

Central to the practice of liberal education is the ideal of academic freedom, and the ideals of academic freedom and neutral science are related in an interesting and surprising way. Together they support a practice within the university that is not intended by the faculty or staff. Here again rules that govern an institution combine to produce effects different from those intended by the members.

According to the ideal of academic freedom, rewards and punishments should not be distributed to teachers or students of the sciences or arts on the basis of their moral or political values but only on the basis of
their work as measured by the standards of the discipline. Students who write good lab reports or exams should not be graded down because their politics are disapproved of. Academic freedom requires that within the school individuals be at liberty to conduct their teaching, learning, or research without fear that their work will be judged by their political commitments. Faculty whose political views are offensive to students, parents, an administrator, school board, trustee, or legislator should not be harassed, denied raises or promotions, or fired for their views. The liberal ideal of neutrality in the classroom supports the ideal of academic freedom, for to be neutral on conceptions of the good, the schools must not reward or punish faculty or students on the basis of their conceptions of the good.

While academic freedom is designed to protect politically unpopular views and the teachers or students who espouse them, value-neutrality in the sciences is designed to limit the location of political speech; for it directs teachers and students not to voice their values in the lab or the classroom—in disciplinary spaces—but to save the expression of values for other more public or more private places. Proposing ideals for the disciplines of science or the arts different from the ideals of public or private life establishes a disciplinary space between public and private. The ideal of value-neutrality in the social sciences prohibits political speech in the new, disciplinary space, and academic freedom permits the regulation of speech that the neutrality imposes.

Academic freedom protects teaching and research in the liberal sciences from political attack and influence as long as the work is seen to be value-neutral and free of political influence. An American university can deny tenure to a sociologist for including her feminist politics in her teaching or research without violating her academic freedom; for academic freedom does not protect the political speech of faculty or students that steps beyond the bounds of their discipline, and feminist sociology steps beyond the bounds of sociology as long as the ideals of that discipline include value-neutrality.

The statements of my own university’s policy on academic freedom in its regulations concerning faculty tenure make the limited nature of academic freedom clear.

The Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota bears witness to its faith [in the traditions of higher education] by entering upon its record the following statements concerning academic freedom: 1. The University of Minnesota should not impose any limitation upon the teacher’s freedom in the exposition of his own subject in the classroom or in addresses and publications.

2. No teacher may claim as his right the privilege of discussion in his classroom of controversial topics that are not pertinent to the course of study that is being pursued.

3. The University of Minnesota should not place any restraint upon the teacher’s freedom in the choice of subjects for research and investigation undertaken on his own initiative.

4. The University of Minnesota should recognize that the teacher in speaking or writing outside of the institution upon subjects beyond the scope of his own field of study is entitled to the same freedom and is subject to the same responsibilities as attach to all other citizens but in added measure.37

The statements continue, but the idea remains the same: academic freedom does not protect speech that is excluded by a faculty member’s discipline, and therefore, given the ideal of value-neutrality, a member whose discipline is science cannot claim any right to engage in political speech in her lab or classroom.

As Amy Gutmann writes in her discussion of the relationship of academic freedom to democratic education:

The core of academic freedom is the freedom of scholars to assess existing theories, established institutions, and widely held beliefs according to the canons of truth adopted by their academic disciplines, without fear of sanction by anyone if they arrive at unpopular conclusions. Academic freedom allows scholars to follow their autonomous judgment wherever it leads them, provided that they remain within the bounds of scholarly standards of inquiry.38

The proviso of remaining within the bounds of scholarly standards, she notes, is sometimes overlooked, but academic freedom rests on the idea that scholars have a duty to remain within those bounds: “Scholars must recognize a duty to observe scholarly standards of inquiry as a condition of their social office.”39 As long as the standards of inquiry in the social sciences include value-neutrality, scholarship in the social sciences must appear to be neutral for scholars to deserve their office, and scholars who include what their colleagues see as politically partisan judgments in their teaching or research are out of bounds and can be sanctioned or disciplined for their words.

When combined with academic freedom regulations, the norms of the social sciences can be a basis for punishing political speech within the university. According to historians of higher education, the norm of neutrality

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has often been cited to justify the dismissal or censure of faculty during times of political conflict.

Academics were unwitting accomplices in [the Communist witch hunts] by virtue of the fact that, beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century and continuing up until virtually the present day, they insisted on deluding themselves with the false idea of "objectivity" (as contrasted with, say, fairness and compassion). Once it had been established as a kind of natural law of the profession that professors were supposed to be resolutely objective and therefore of necessity above the battle, it was simple enough for state legislators, trustees, and administrators to fire them for taking unpopular "partisan" positions on controversial issues.40

The legislators, trustees, and administrators who censured the professors cannot be faulted for violating their academic freedom but can be praised for defending the liberal, scholarly standards of the social sciences against social science teachers who use the classroom to promote their political ideals.

In showing how values inform the social sciences, I oppose those scholarly standards and hope to remove a threat to openly partisan research and teaching in the university. Proper scholarly standards, I argue, are not violated by political speech, and scholars who include such speech in their work are not flouting their duty to observe scholarly standards of inquiry. Their work can be protected by their university's policy on academic freedom if the academic community can be persuaded that liberalism in science is not possible or desirable. As I suggested earlier, the liberal sciences have added another space - a disciplinary space - to the distinction within the liberal state between public and private arenas. Political speech, according to the liberal approach, is permissible in public and private, but not in any disciplinary spaces. A perfectionist approach would place the social sciences in the public space and increase the academic freedom of the social sciences.

Academic conservatives like Allan Bloom, William Bennett, Roger Kimball, and Dinesh D'Souza who oppose efforts to diversify the curriculum or critically interpret the canon complain that such efforts are politically partisan, and they appeal to the ideal of a value-neutral or liberal university to try to discredit them. Though, typically, their objection is to the introduction of political judgment into the humanities rather than the social sciences, they use university policies on academic freedom, just as the critics of leftist social science did in the 1950s, to bolster their case. Academics, they argue, have a duty to observe the scholarly standards of inquiry that are a condition of their office. The scholarly standards for teaching and research in the humanities, on their view, forbid politics in the interpretation and evaluation of works of art.41 Only considerations of fact and aesthetic value should enter into literary or artistic interpretations or evaluations. Judgments of aesthetic value have a place in the classroom, but judgments of political value do not.

Feminist scholars and other "illiberal" members of the faculty fail to observe these standards and, so, on the conservatives' view, are failing in their academic duties. The conservatives exploit liberal ideals to attack scholars who promote the political values they oppose. University policy on academic freedom allows them to censure the scholars for failing in their academic duties; for universities have an obligation to uphold scholarly standards and enforce academic responsibility, and academic freedom permits them to do so.42

Many proponents of the new critical approaches to the humanities and social sciences do not understand that, should their scholarly discipline maintain a standard of value-neutrality, the liberal ideal of academic freedom gives them no right to practise the new teaching and scholarship and no protection from those who would censure them. In a recent exchange with John Searle over the "politicization" of the humanities, Gerald Graff, for example, writes: "What I did defend is an individual teacher's right to endorse any belief in the classroom, including a belief in 'social transformation' or 'the politics of the left.' I take it to be merely a restatement of a basic principle of academic freedom."43 Graff is mistaken if the University of Minnesota's policy on academic freedom is any guide, for that policy states that no teacher may claim as his [sic] right the privilege of discussion in his classroom of controversial topics that are not pertinent to the course of study that is being pursued; and, on Searle's view and that of other critics of politics in the humanities and the university, the controversial topics that Graff and others are introducing into the classroom are not pertinent to the course of study - namely, the humanities - that is being pursued. To the extent that Searle's views on pertinence are favored on Graff's campus or favored by those in the university or scholarly community with the most power and prestige, Graff will be seen not to have any right to endorse the politics of the left in his classroom but to have a duty not to do so.

In short, the liberal ideals of the university are expressed in its policies of academic freedom, but these policies do not permit political expression when the expression is excluded by the norms of the academic disciplines. The norms of the liberal sciences exclude political expression, and, as a result, in order to enforce its own liberal ideals, the university can forbid the faculty from advancing a view of the good life or a conception
of human perfection in their academic writings or their classrooms. Their academic freedom does not give them any right to practice an illiberal science. The ideal of neutrality within their discipline limits the freedom granted them by the ideal of neutrality within their university.

Conclusion

The liberal ideal of neutrality has been applied to the intellectual disciplines as much as to the state and to education. The idea in each case has been to limit the overt, intentional promotion of standards of human perfection or conceptions of the good to private spaces—family, churches, civic organizations, and political parties. However, the proponents of the ideal have not appreciated the extent to which the architecture of the state, the schools, or an intellectual discipline like the social sciences is partisan and colors the practices that occur there with value. Still, neutrality can be defended as an ideal for the state. The aim of this book is to show why it cannot be equally defended as an ideal for the social sciences and to offer a number of alternative ideas that allow social scientists to join with families, churches, civic associations, and political parties to promote and advance a standard of human perfection.

NOTES


2 Our word “science” comes from the Latin scientia, which means to know or to discern. Up through the seventeenth century, “science” was used to cover any body of interrelated beliefs that could be easily remembered or applied. However, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lexicographers came to distinguish science from the arts and from philosophy. The word “science” then came to mean a body of knowledge having an exact, objective, systematic basis.


4 See B. A. Ackerman, Social Justice in the Liberal State (Yale University Press, 1980), p. 10. As Ackerman explains it, liberal principles imply that “nobody has the right to vindicate political authority by asserting a privileged insight into the moral universe which denies the rest of us.” See also R. Dworkin, A Matter of Principle (Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 205; B. Barry, Political Argument (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 66, who writes: “Classical liberalism has had other strands than this one, no doubt, but one was certainly the idea that the state is an instrument for satisfying the wants that men happen to have rather than a means for making good men (i.e., cultivating desirable wants or dispositions in its citizens); and A. Gutmann,


5 J. Gray, Liberalism, p. 82.


7 Because male pronouns were used in the classics of political philosophy exclusively rather than inclusively—i.e., to include all males but no females—there is a problem in choosing pronouns today to paraphrase these classics. I don’t want to reproduce the attitudes toward women assumed or expressed there, but neither do I want to misrepresent the classics by washing those attitudes out. My solution is to use male pronouns whenever it seems that the authors had only or mostly males in mind and female pronouns (inclusively) whenever I am speaking for myself.

8 Some political philosophers dispute whether there is an idea or principle that is shared by the variety of approaches to political life that are called “liberal,” or whether all the approaches display some unity. With Dworkin and Ackerman, I believe that there is; but I will assume rather than argue for this view here.

9 Dworkin maintains that liberalism based on neutrality finds its most natural defense in some form of moral skepticism (Matter of Principle, p. 205), but John Stuart Mill and John Locke, fathers of the liberal theory of the state, did not rest their liberalism on any form of moral skepticism. As Brian Barry points out, Mill did not doubt that some conceptions of the good were better than others; he recommended only that the state act as if they were of equal merit. The most prominent examples of liberalism based on moral skepticism are in economics, where the idea is common that all judgments of value are mere expressions of personal preference or taste and, as a result, are not open to rational assessment. See, e.g., M. Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom (University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 110–15.


11 J. S. Mill’s On Liberty is the source of this school of liberalism; but, as critics of Mill’s argument for liberalism have pointed out, if neutrality is based on the goodness of autonomy, then the ideal of a neutral state is not, itself, neutral between competing views of the good; and the state, in remaining neutral on moral questions in order to encourage or preserve autonomy, is enforcing one conception of the good over others.

12 Dworkin, Matter of Principle, p. 205.

13 The word “liberal” in “liberal education” can be understood in either of two ways: as it was in the Renaissance to cover general as against specialized or vocational training or as it was in the eighteenth century to cover policies or institutions that emphasized neutrality and autonomy. Here it is intended in the second sense. Not all theories of liberal education emphasize neutrality. In Democracy and Education, John Dewey, e.g., maintained that the schools, public and private, should develop in children the habits of virtues of fair-mindedness and courage; still, these virtues are relatively formal, and Dewey did not think that even these should be taught so much as inspired or encouraged.
temperance, and wisdom – the state should be neutral was no part of Greek political thought. Conversely, the state or any other social institution can be liberal but undemocratic. A constitutional monarchy is governed by royal command rather than popular will, but the monarch can be bound to rule according to liberal ideals and principles. Hobbes’s Leviathan was such a monarch. I return to the relation between liberal and democratic ideals in chapter 10.

26 See R. N. Bellah, R. Madsen, W. M. Sullivan, A. Swidler and S. M. Tipton, Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (University of California Press, 1985), pp. 226–7, for a discussion of the growth of expertise in relation to a number of American institutions, especially religion. For a discussion of the nature and significance of professionalization, see A. Abbott, The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Labor (University of Chicago Press, 1988). Professionalization links the social sciences with the liberal state in the following way. Central to the development of the social sciences is their emergence as professions, and a hallmark of the professions is their role as learned servants to the public. Members of professions like medicine and law and disciplines like economics and psychology develop or acquire specialized knowledge with the hope or aim that such knowledge will further the ends of their public – viz., their patients, clients, or subjects. Public service is also the function of the liberal state, a function that is carried out by professionals who are often, by training, social scientists and whose clients or subjects are citizens of the state. With both the social sciences and the state, the servants are expected to defer to their masters, the public, for purpose and direction, and remain neutral on questions of value over which the masters disagree.

27 As I explain in chapter 2, although Weber maintained that the social sciences should be value-free, he did not claim that they should be value-neutral; and while he is often seen as a proponent of liberal science, his ideal of value-neutrality is not the liberal ideal that all aspects of a social science, including the methods of reasoning, should be neutral concerning the nature of the good or standards of human perfection. That is, I will offer an interpretation of Weber as a philosopher of the social sciences who supports, rather than opposes, most of my own liberal views. Weber’s views, as I interpret them, are still somewhat puzzling, however; for, although he believed that the practice of the social sciences must rely on the scientist’s own judgments of cultural significance, and, as a result, his conception of the good, he was nevertheless a moral skeptic, believing that reason could not resolve disputes concerning the ultimate good.

28 M. Weber, Methodology, pp. 18–19.


30 Robbins, Essay, p. 150.


32 See, e.g., B. Barry, Political Argument, p. 75.

33 See Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 311.

34 A. C. Pigou, Unemployment (Horn University Library, 1913), pp. 10–11.
Max Weber and the methodology of the social sciences

It is common today for social scientists to maintain that their work is or should be free of judgments of personal, cultural, moral, and political value. They attribute this idea to Max Weber, who, in a number of essays written between 1904 and 1917, argues against the promotion of values in economics and sociology.¹ Weber is not the first to warn against values in the social sciences; Mill, Sidgwick, Marshall, and John Neville Keynes before him each fathered the idea that ethical and political judgments are not the business of the social sciences.² Keynes, for example, wrote in 1890: "It is not . . . the function of science to pass ethical judgments; and political economy regarded as a positive science may, therefore, be said to be independent of ethics."³ Nevertheless, Weber nurses the distinction between social science and politics and makes it robust, and many social scientists today credit him with the view that the social sciences should be value-neutral and turn to his methodological writings for the reasons.

Weber's own liberal view of science rests on his distinction between value-freedom and value-relevance. When it comes to discovery, Weber concedes, personal, cultural, moral, or political values cannot be eliminated from the social sciences; what social scientists choose to investigate or discover, they choose on the basis of the values they expect their investigations to advance. But Weber called on the social sciences to be value-free. They should not present their values, he said, as part of their findings – part of what they have discovered through their investigations. The findings should be value-free; and they are value-free, on Weber's view, if and only if they do not contain any judgments of personal, cultural, moral, and political value.

Weber's call for value-freedom assumes that research in the social sciences can be value-free. In chapter 9, I argue, against Weber, that the language of the social sciences cannot be cleansed of moral or political
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Collecting data in the social sciences

In the preceding chapters, I looked at one important part of the practice of the liberal sciences, theorizing. In chapter 2, I looked at the practice of formulating and validating theories containing simple class-terms, as well as theories containing ideal-types, and in chapters 3–5 at the practice of formulating and validating developmental theories in psychology and political science, functional theories in sociology, and rational choice theories in economics. In this chapter, I look at another important part of the practice of liberal science: gathering the facts and collecting the data. My aim is to describe the influence of values on the scientist's choice of what data to collect and how to collect them and the influence of the gathering of data on the values of the surrounding community. I also explain how the ideal of value-neutrality influences the way interviews and experiments in the social sciences are conducted and how the interviews and experiments favor one conception of the good over others.

In addition, this chapter offers an account of the methods used to collect data in the social sciences and the conceptions of reliability and validity that frame those methods. Most social scientists believe that the methods must be value-neutral for the data to be reliable or valid; but, as I explain, given the conception of validity employed in the social sciences, the data are valid only if the methods are not neutral but partisan. Further, the data can be reliable and partisan as long as the values favored by the data are shared by everyone who collects them.

The reliability and validity of data

Social scientists collect their data in different ways—through structured and unstructured interviews, naturalistic and experimental observation, field experiments and laboratory experiments, self-reports, archival records, questionnaires, psychological testing, and archeological retrieval—by following some guidelines or protocols—protocols for conducting interviews, designing and conducting experiments, writing questionnaires, selecting samples, constructing psychological tests, searching an archive, deciphering a record, and excavating a burial ground. These protocols tell the social scientist how, where, and when to obtain her data, and they guide her in observing and measuring the individuals, artifacts, institutions, or events which, when properly observed and measured, supply her with facts or evidence against which to test her theories or hypotheses. Guidelines or protocols for interviewing, for example, contain statements like:

1. The use of follow-up questions or probes is advisable at many points in the ordinary interview, especially in connection with free responses. The questionnaire should anticipate where these are required and should provide the appropriate wording.

To determine whether individual questions and their sequence have the same meaning for all respondents and are clearly understood, it is generally recommended that, after the schedule has been developed through pilot interviewing, a pretest be conducted on a random sample of the respondents.

Guidelines for naturalistic and experimental observation include:

Reliability precedes questions of validity. Consequently, interobserver agreement must always be obtained and reported.

These guidelines are intended to eliminate or neutralize differences in how researchers observe, interview, survey, or describe their subjects, and to help them offer data free of the values of whoever collects them.

Because interviewers are human beings, such biasing factors can never be overcome completely, but their effects can be reduced by standardizing the interview, so that the interviewer has as little free choice as possible. Thus, the use of standard wording in survey questions aims to prevent the bias that would result if each interviewer worded the question in his or her own fashion. Similarly, if interviewers are given standard instructions on probing procedure, on the classification of doubtful answers, and so on, their biases will have less chance to operate.
Only observations or data collected in accordance with these guidelines are treated as facts, used to test theories, presented in published research, and considered to be good scientific data.

On the liberal view, data are good only if value-neutral and are value-neutral if reliable and valid. Data are reliable if they are repeatable and consistent. Reliability is measured by inter-observer agreement, for if there is agreement between observers, then the observations of each should be free of personal partisanship. But partisanship can survive inter-observer agreement. Political interests that are shared by every observer or are woven into the protocols can influence the observations of all. Reliable data reflect the world as seen by every observer, but the image of the world of all can still be culturally or politically partisan.

Good data, according to the liberal view, should be free of shared as well as personal politics; they should have what the liberal sciences call internal and external validity. Internal validity means that the data are true of the participant subjects or those from whom the data are collected. They record the way the subjects of the interviews, surveys, experiments, records, tests, or observations are and not how the observers think they are or ought to be. Externally valid data are true of the participant subjects (those in the sample) and of unobserved subjects (those in the larger population) as well. They are true of the individuals or groups over whom the variables of the theory range – the theoretical subjects – and not merely those from whom the data are collected.

Techniques for evaluating the validity of data vary with the instruments or methods used to collect them. The internal validity of interview data is checked by examining the questionnaires, seeing how the interviews are conducted, and comparing the responses of different subjects to various questions. The external validity of the data is checked by an assessment of the representativeness of the respondents chosen for the interviews and by comparing their responses with other information about the theoretical subjects. The external validity of data collected through testing is measured by evaluating the test, and the test is evaluated by its ability to distinguish between subjects already judged to be different or by comparing the test results with the results of other tests believed to measure the same characteristics of the subject.

However, none of these techniques assures that reliable and valid data are value-neutral. They assure agreement but not neutrality; for they do not eliminate values common to the instruments of observation, the different test results, the different ways of measuring or coding the responses, or the beliefs about the subjects previously accepted or assumed in the ways the tests or surveys are validated.

Consider test data. Scholastic aptitude tests are used to measure the cognitive abilities of some population of subjects. The data they collect are the subjects’ scores on the tests, and the validity of these data is measured by content and predictive validity – by the approval of the test items by experts and by how well the test scores predict the performances of the subjects on some range of other tasks which prominent members of the surrounding community already agree are measures of scholastic aptitude. That is, according to the standard methods of psychological measurement, the test data are accurate measures of the scholastic abilities of the test subjects in proportion to their predictive power and, in particular, their power to predict the scholastic performance of these subjects.

One particularly prominent scholastic aptitude test is the GRE General Test developed by the Educational Testing Service to measure the general verbal, quantitative, and analytical abilities related to successful performance in graduate school. According to the ETS, the test measures skills acquired over a long period of time and not related to any specific field of study. The ETS maintains that the data collected with the test – that is, the scores on the test – are valid, basing their claim on research indicating that the scores are good predictors of success in the first year of graduate school. In principle, the validity of the test is the extent to which it measures the intellectual abilities of the subjects; but, in practice, the validity is a matter of how well the overall test measures success in a representative sample of the nation’s graduate schools (the predictive validity of the test) and how well the individual items on the test measure what some representative specialists judge to be the skills required for success in graduate study (the content validity of the test). Once we look at how, in practice, the validity of the test data are determined, we see that valid test data need not be value-neutral. In fact, if there is partisanship in the criterion of success used to determine the predictive validity of the test or in the judgments of the specialists used to judge the content validity, it will pass through to the test and the test data. The test and the data will be partisan not in any overt or intentional sense, but in the institutional sense discussed in chapter 1. If there is partisanship in the grading of first-year graduate students in the representative sample of schools, then predictive validity will not free the test of that partisanship but will require that the test include it.

The Educational Testing Service recently defended its GRE exams against charges of racial bias by showing that the scores predicted the success in graduate school of racial minorities as well as they predicted the success of white students. That is, the ETS showed that the correlation coefficient – that is, the degree of correlation between test scores and graduate school grades – is the same for students of different races. However,
this does not show that the exams, grades, or data are value-neutral—
for example, that they do not favor the cultural values of one group of
students over those of another—but only that any partisanship is
matched on the different rungs of the educational ladder, the partisanship
passing up and down the ladder from the schools to the testing service.

What the predictive validity of the GRE test assures is that the cultural
biases in the measures of success employed by graduate departments or
graduate schools are included in the data collected by the test. Graduate
programs in history, philosophy, literature, sociology, and art history
favor one among many conceptions of good reasoning, analysis, exposition,
interpretation, criticism, and writing, and the achievements of first-
year graduate students in these programs are measured in relation to these
conceptions. For the coefficient of correlation between test scores and
success in graduate school to be high, the test must favor the conceptions
of good disciplinary practice that the graduate programs favor; and if these
conceptions are partisan, the ETS must pass the partisanship through to
its aptitude test.

In the case of institutional discrimination against black Americans in
schooling, students are assigned to schools not on the basis of their race
but on the basis of their place of residence, but the influence of race on
residence is passed through to the schools. With aptitude testing, the
racial partisanship favoring one dialect, vocabulary, grammar, literature,
or body of experience over another is passed from the schools—the
discipline of the classroom and the curriculum—to the test data. The
ETS believes that its data are racially neutral because they are valid, but
the ETS is mistaken. Because its data are valid, they are not racially
neutral, because the schools are not neutral.

Most of the data in child psychology, to cite another example, come
from experimental or naturalistic observation. The observations are guided
by protocols meant to insure that the data are reliable and valid. How-
ever, the protocols insure only that the data cohere with similar data and
some accepted or common beliefs about the experimental subjects. As I
explain in chapter 7, the very practice of sorting some subjects by their
stages in life and including childhood as a life-stage is partisan. As a
result, data about children, no matter how they are collected, reflect the
values behind the choice of life-stages. The data may be true of the
children, but the subjects are counted as children because of the values
of those who sort the subjects this way. The data are not mirror images
of the subjects but portraits drawn to fit or reflect an interest—namely,
the interest behind treating subjects between the ages of 4 and 12 as
forming a kind.

The methods of observing the subjects pass through to the data the
conception of human perfection or the good life that leads the community
to distinguish adults from children. The data would not be valid were
they collected from adults rather than children: but childhood is a stage
of life, and stages of life are not natural facts but reflections of a com-
munity’s values. Since the distinction between adults and children is based
on values, the data of childhood collected by the psychologists assume
those values. Their data are partisan, but the partisanship is not overt
or intentional. The psychologists do not allow their own thoughts about
children to color their data, but the very fact that they count their data
as the data of childhood means that values have trickled down from the
community to their own practice of data collection and to the reliable
and valid data they collect.

My general point is that the methods for collecting data in the social
sciences eliminate overt, intentional forms of partisanship but not insti-
tutional partisanship—perfectionist ideals shared by the surrounding com-
munity. In fact, the ideal of validity requires that the surrounding
partisanship be passed on to the data. In passing the partisanship on from
the schools, churches, clinics, and courts to their data, the social scientists
are unable to live up to their own ideal of value-neutral data; but unless
they pass the partisanship on, they are unable to live up to their own
ideals of valid data.

Valid data and codes of ethics

The methods or protocols for interviewing, sampling, psychological test-
ing, and naturalistic or experimental observation are not intended to
describe the social scientists’ practice but to prescribe it. They don’t tell
the social scientist what she does but what she ought to do. So, in
Weber’s terms, they are not value-free but value-laden; they contain a
norm or ideal from which directives for immediate practical activity can
be derived. However, the values with which the protocols are laden,
the liberal would say, are scientific values, for the practical activity they
direct is the collection of scientific data.

On the liberal view, a protocol or method for practicing a liberal
science should be prescriptive but not morally or politically prescriptive
and should direct against bad science but not bad conduct. As long as
they are reliable and valid, the data are good, even if the methods used
to collect them are morally objectionable. The American Anthropological
Association writes, for example:

Constraint, deception and secrecy have no place in science. Actions
which compromise the intellectual integrity and autonomy of
research scholars and institutions not only weaken those international understandings essential to our discipline, but in so doing they also threaten any contribution anthropology might make in our own society and to the general interests of human welfare.  

It does not say that data collected using constraint, deception, and secrecy are not good as data or that the research is not good as anthropological research. It says that anthropology is less respected and useful when such methods are used, not that a measure of the quality of data in anthropology is how well the methods for collecting the data conform to a code of ethics.

Given the liberal ideal of value-neutrality, ethical codes must be located outside, rather than within, the codes of good science. The separation between good science and good conduct is central to the ideal of a value-neutral science; for if the protocols of good science included an ethical code, the science would favor whatever conception of the good was favored by the code. The separation of ethical values from the value of good data collection is a feature that the liberal sciences share with the natural sciences.

The separation is clear, for example, in biomedical research. Consider the debate over the use of the biological data collected during so-called medical experiments carried out on the inmates of the Nazi death camps by camp physicians. Both the opponents and the proponents of the use of the data agree that the methods used to collect them were ethically unacceptable; they agree that the fact that the experiments or interviews were unethical does not itself preclude the data's being either reliable or valid. Until recently, they also agreed that some of the data -- for example, the data from the Dachau hypothermia experiments -- were collected while adhering to scientific principles. They maintained that though many of the experiments were not properly designed -- for example, they lacked control groups -- a few were properly designed and conformed to all the experimental protocols of biomedical science.

Before their validity was called into question, the debate over these experiments centered on whether it is morally permissible to use reliable and valid data gathered in the past in an inhumane or morally impermissible manner. The general moral question posed by the Nazi case, on everyone's view, was whether it is ever morally permissible to use reliable and valid data collected in unethical experiments or interviews, not whether data collected in unethical experiments or interviews could ever be reliable or valid. The practice of science by the Nazis violated the Nuremberg code on human experimentation, but few critics suggest that the practices ought not to be called science simply because they violated the code.  

So long as the practices do not violate the norms of "neutral" science, they are scientific, even if evil or unethical.

According to the liberal view of the relation between science and ethics, moral education should supplement, but is not part of, an education in the sciences. Some codes of ethics, for example, require experimenters to seek consent from their subjects; but the experimenters do not lose their claims to be doing science for failing to do so, for obtaining informed consent, on the liberal view, is not itself a part of science, since codes of ethics and science are thought to be absolutely heterogeneous. As Weber writes in "Science as a Vocation":

Now one cannot demonstrate scientifically what the duty of an academic teacher is. One can only demand of the teacher that he have the intellectual integrity to see that it is one thing to state facts, to determine mathematical or logical relations or the internal structure of cultural values, while it is another thing to answer questions of the value of culture and its individual contents and the question of how one should act in the cultural community and in political associations. These are quite heterogeneous problems.

Scientists believed that the hypothermia experiments had some scientific validity because they upheld Weber's concept of the heterogeneity of science and ethics. Of course, science does not condone the Nazis' experiments or any other ethically questionable practice, for as science, it neither condones nor condemns any violation of any code of ethics.

The relation between science and ethics is seen by those in science in the same way as the relation between business and ethics is seen by those in business. There is faith that what is good for business is good for the general public and hope that an invisible hand will steer corporate profit and public welfare always in the same direction. But faith and hope are not enough. Individuals or firms by pursuing their own gain do sometimes advance the public interest; but markets are not magic, and often profits do not trickle down, and the consequences of private gain are not the public good.

Business and ethics, like science and ethics, are treated as separate spheres, each with its own values and norms. In the sphere of business the value is individual return on investment, and in the sphere of ethics the value is respecting the rights of individuals or increasing the public welfare. Even when ethical values affect a business decision -- when, for the moment, good ethics is good business -- the relationship between good ethics and good business is only contingent and coincidental, for the standards of goodness in business and ethics are entirely heterogeneous.
Similarly, there is faith that what is good for science is good for its subjects, but no invisible hand can be expected to steer reliable and valid data in the sciences always in the direction of the well-being of the theoretical or participant subjects of science. Sociologists, by pursuing reliable or valid data, may advance the interests of their respondents; but, as a rule, the benefits of good interview data do not trickle down to the respondents, and reliability and validity do not emerge as a moral good. As long as the ideals of science and business are liberal, there is no assurance that by living up to its ideals, science or business will improve the prospects or fortunes of the public. In particular, in any given area of research in the liberal sciences, the relationship between collecting good data and doing good will be only contingent and coincidental.

My point here is not that the pursuit of good data or profit requires a scientist or business firm to act unethically or in opposition to the public good, but only that it permits it; for there is no assurance that good data or profits are achieved better by doing the morally right rather than the morally wrong thing. Unless good science or business is measured by the yardstick of what morally ought to be, neither can promise less moral harm than moral good; but if good science is measured by what morally ought to be, science cannot be what liberals think it ought to be: free of moral, cultural, and political value.

The separation of science and ethics is the liberal ideal, but teaching and research in the social sciences, I have been arguing, are unavoidably partisan. A science can be free of values in the form of an ethical code, but not free of values. Ethical codes are manifest forms of partisanship; but partisanship in the liberal sciences is seldom manifest but usually latent or, as I suggested, in Chapter 1, seldom de jure but often de facto. But manifest forms of partisanship have an advantage over latent or de facto forms, since they are usually the subject of discussion and debate. The decision to adopt a code of ethics or to include a code in one’s science invites doubts, objections, resistance, or alternatives. When the values in the science are not in the form of a code but in the design of experiments, tests, or interviews or in the categories into which the data are sorted (part of the temple rather than the service), neither the researchers nor their subjects are able to see, let alone debate, them. In short, the question isn’t whether the data should or should not be partisan, but how and where the partisanship should be placed.

Research requiring harm

Some protocols designed to provide social scientists with reliable and valid data do not merely permit, but require, harm to be done to the participant subjects, for they call for discomfort, stress, or deception, or they prohibit social scientists from obtaining the informed consent of their subjects. “The use of deception has become more and more extensive, and is now a commonplace and almost standard feature of social psychological experiments. Deception has been turned into a game, often played with great skill and virtuosity.” The goal of collecting reliable and valid data in psychology, according to many psychologists, requires concealment or deception and, as a result, research on human subjects without their informed consent. Informed consent, on their view, reduces the quality of the data and calls the results of the psychological research into question.

Informing subjects about the purpose and procedures of a study has been found to alter subject’s data by reducing the spontaneity and naïveté in the responses to manipulated variables in a controlled setting. Gardner [G. T. Gardner, “Effects of Federal Human Subjects Regulations on Data Obtained in Environmental Stressor Research,” *Journal of Personality Social Psychology*, 36, pp. 628–34] conducted an experiment to test the effects of Federal informed consent regulations on the results of environmental noise research. In brief, his study focused on negative performance aftereffects of noise by comparing a group of subjects that gave informed consent with a group of subjects that had not. The findings revealed that only subjects from whom informed consent was obtained failed to show the expected negative performance aftereffects.

Concealment or deception is necessary if the researcher is to establish the reliability or validity of her data, because informing the subjects could bias their responses to the experiment or interview.

Good sociology may also require concealment and deception. Sociologists maintain that there are circumstances in which it is impossible to recruit respondents and obtain good interview data without concealing facts from potential respondents or misleading them about the interview.

There are some situations . . . in which the characteristics of the respondent set, the interview demands, and the interviewer combine to make the likelihood of participation so remote that the interviewer is led to consider the possibility of covert interviewing— that is, concealing his true role and collecting information by playing a role other than that of interviewer. He may, for example, try to obtain membership in the group that he is studying, or he may
attempt to become an inconspicuous and innocuous part of the environment of the respondent set.\textsuperscript{19}

The sociologist is in a bind when she needs to deceive or mislead her subjects in order to collect good data, since acts of deception and concealment violate her own code of ethics. She faces a conflict: either she conforms to her ethical code or she impairs the effectiveness of the interviews and lowers the quality of her data. One solution, popular among sociologists and social psychologists, is to fashion or tailor a code of ethics that permits deception and concealment, or, in other words, to cut the morality to fit the science.

The codes of ethics adopted by professional associations like the American Psychological Association and the American Sociological Association have been well tailored. They permit the use of deception and concealment whenever the harm to the subject is slight and is offset by expected benefits to others.\textsuperscript{20} These codes of ethics are based on the ethics of cost-benefit analysis. Minor harms to the subject can be balanced by expected benefits to society. However, since knowledge is seen as good for its own sake, little evidence of benefits is necessary.\textsuperscript{21} What is lacking in the codes is the idea that the participants have rights that override the expected benefits of the research. In particular, subjects are not seen as having rights to the truth about the experiment or interview, truth that could be used to decide whether or not to participate.\textsuperscript{22}

In this respect, codes of ethics in the social sciences are much more permissive than the Nuremberg code governing permissible medical experiments or the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki on biomedical research involving human subjects. The first basic principle of the Nuremberg code is that informed or voluntary consent is absolutely essential in any experiments with human subjects, and, according to the code:

[Voluntary consent] requires that before the acceptance of an affirmative decision by the experimental subject there should be made known to him the nature, duration, and purpose of the experiment; the method and means by which it is to be conducted; all inconveniences and hazards reasonably to be expected; and the effects upon his health or person which may possibly come from his participation in the experiment.\textsuperscript{23}

Informed consent precludes the kind of concealment and deception commonly employed in psychological and sociological experiments. Social scientists are aware of this, of course; but they maintain that informed consent is less important in social science than in biomedical research because of the differences in risk to the subjects.\textsuperscript{24} However, if risks are different, personal autonomy is the same. No differences between biomedical and social science research make autonomy a less appropriate ideal for one than the other, and the point of the doctrine of informed consent is to protect the autonomy, not merely the welfare or well-being, of the subject.

Pure research in the social sciences is intended to increase social well-being by increasing knowledge and is not designed to protect the rights of the participant subjects or even to give their well-being special prominence. The research is merely permitted to show concern for them when necessary to secure or maintain their participation.

If, by restricting the respondent too sharply to information relevant to the substantive goals of the research, the interviewer ignores the respondent's interests, concerns and feelings, the interviewer may reduce, or even lose, the respondent's participation. On the other hand, if, through excessive concern with participation, the interviewer allows the respondent's interests to govern the content of the response, the resulting material may have little or no relevance to the subject matter of the research.\textsuperscript{25}

Concern for the subject is inappropriate whenever it would decrease the likelihood that the data collected will be reliable or valid. As a result, good data in the social sciences is seldom good for those from whom the data have been collected.

The conduct of interviews

Good psychology and sociology can require more than the deception of participant subjects; they can require their subordination. Much of the interviewing to collect data for research in the social sciences is directive rather than nondirective. In directive interviewing, interviewers move the respondent through predetermined topics and limit their participation to answering questions.\textsuperscript{26} They determine both the topics of the interview and what the respondent is to say about them.

Directive interviewing prescribes a unilateral relationship in which the interviewer elicits but does not give information.\textsuperscript{27} Interviewers may interrogate respondents on details of their lives but are required to reveal as little about themselves as possible.
In a social relationship, it is customary for both parties to develop a mutually satisfactory balance between giving and receiving information. Although one of the parties may emerge as more influential in determining the choice of subject matter and the duration and direction of the conversation, such leadership may shift back and forth so that, in the long run, both parties have a sense of mutuality. In interviewing, on the other hand, the task of gathering information calls for a largely unilateral relationship, the interviewer taking the leadership role in questioning the respondent or in guiding him in the shaping of his answers. If the interviewer, either because of his personal needs or because of needs he perceives in the respondent, drops his role of questioner and launches into personal anecdotes, an exchange of view, or other personal matters, or if he permits the respondent to assume the role of questioner, he will inevitably prolong the interview beyond the point of maximal usefulness; moreover, he will risk biasing the responses through the disclosure of his own views and values.

In a relationship in which power is shared, each party is expected to answer and not always parry the other’s questions; in directive interviewing, the interviewer is obliged to always parry them. Only if she parries can the interviewer be sure that she is not biasing her subject’s responses; only if she refuses to share her own sentiments or opinions with her subjects can she be sure that their responses would have been the same had the interviewer been different and that the data she gathers are reliable.

The interview protocols define the roles of the parties to the interview, and the role they assign to the respondents is that of deferring to the interests and requests of the interviewer. “The person doing the interviewing must actively and continually construct the respondent as passive.”

They must answer rather than ask questions, serve rather than be served, defer rather than resist, agree rather than disagree, and please rather than displease. “It is not enough for the scientist to understand the world of meaning of his informants; if he is to secure valid data via the structured interview, respondents must be socialized into answering questions in proper fashion.” The protocols require the interviewers to be impersonal, detached, and silent about their own thoughts and feelings and require the respondents to be open, obliging, and personal about theirs.

The relationship between interviewer and respondent reproduces traditional sex roles, for the interviewer, at least in direct interviewing, always wears the trousers. “It is no accident that the methodology textbooks (with one notable exception – Moser, 1958) refer to the interviewer as male. Although no interviewees are referred to as females, there are a number of references to ‘housewives’ as the kind of people interviewers are most likely to meet in the course of their work.”

Though the research may be intended to increase our understanding of social equality or personal autonomy, the methods of interviewing work against these values. “Interviewers define the role of interviewees as subordinates; extracting information is more to be valued than yielding it; the convention of interviewer-interviewee hierarchy is a rationalization of inequality; what is good for interviewees is not necessarily good for interviewees.”

The interview protocols do not merely prevent the interviewer from increasing the status of the respondents or promoting their interests but require her to lessen their status by subordinating their interests to her own. The protocols are recipes for preparing participant subjects to meet the requirements of a science diet. The participants are squeezed, pressed, and rolled until their reluctance, concerns, and curiosity are kneaded out and they fit neatly into the scientist’s measuring cup.

Ann Oakley recommends that sociologists interested in women’s empowerment give up textbook methods for collecting reliable and valid data and make their practice as sociologists more directly relevant to feminist values. Instead of aiming at knowledge of others, sociologists might use to increase the power or prospects of women as theoretical subjects, feminist sociologists should aim at increasing the power or prospects of the women who are their participant subjects. To this end, their interviews should give their female respondents an opportunity to tell their own stories in their own words.

Proponents of liberalism in the social sciences would say that feminists like Oakley are recommending that sociologists give up science for social activism. The practice of friendly conversations with women is nice, but what does it have to do with the practice of science? To do good for women, they would say, we have to know the truth about women; this truth comes through reliable and valid data; and reliable and valid data come through the standard protocols.

In reply, Oakley maintains that feminist methods are more suitable than the standard methods when doing repeated or longitudinal interviewing and should be adopted when doing such interviewing. But her defense of her approach seems like a retreat to the textbooks; for she defends her efforts on behalf of her female subjects as a means of winning their confidence and loyalty and of persuading them to continue to participate in her interviews rather than as a response to their own expressed needs. She cites research by Laslett and Rapoport to show that by being responsive to the respondent, interviewers can collect more information in greater
depth than they could were they to follow the protocols of directive interviewing. She maintains that her alternative to a masculine model of sociology enables her to collect more or better data, for her alternative promotes the trust on which a continuing interview relationship depends. "It becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship."

If Oakley’s aim is to collect reliable and valid data and her responsiveness to her subjects is merely a means, then the changes she is recommending in interviewing women seem to be more for the sake of liberal science than for women. To convince her more liberal colleagues of the soundness of her methods, she makes them sound more familiar than feminist – a more enlightened way of using women to collect data for theorizing in sociology, but a way of using them nonetheless.

The issue is whether the data are better in a sense that the liberal sociologist would accept – more reliable or valid and better for theorizing (where theorizing is thought of in a traditional way as representing an underlying reality) – or better because they are more responsive to the interests of women. Oakley suggests that her goal is to have her respondents find out about themselves through interviewing; but she also suggests that it is to have the interviewer find out about them through interviewing. She leaves it unclear whether her aim is more willing women for sociology or a more willing sociology for women.

Oakley is caught between two opposing approaches to research in the social sciences. On one approach, the traditional, nonpartisan, or liberal approach, the participant subject has no role but to provide the researcher with good data. The participant subject does not influence how the research is conducted, and the research is not designed to be good for her. She is merely the means by which the researcher attempts to acquire the data. On another approach, a perfectionist approach, which I discuss in chapter 10, the research is designed for the good of the participant subject, according to her own conception of the good, and the data are not good unless the subjects find the practice of gathering them unobjectionable and the practice contributes directly to their education and well-being. Such an approach is illiberal or partisan and opposes the liberal belief that the community of science should seek the truth and leave a search for the good to others – for example, the family or the Church.

In giving women a voice, Oakley seems to be doing perfectionist research; but in rationalizing their participation in terms of traditional research interests, she seems to be doing traditional, liberal research and only deviating from the norms in order to continue to use her subjects in an attempt to acquire good data. In chapter 10, I describe some feminist research that is clearly and overtly partisan and that opposes the liberal distinction between the true and the good.

Though liberals attempt to free their data of values, they cannot do so, for, as I explained earlier, their standards of reliability and validity require them to pass the community’s values through to their data. Moreover, their idea of neutrality is too narrow. On the liberal view, as long as psychologists or sociologists do not speak the words of morality, their contributions are value-neutral; but neutrality is not simply a matter of words, it is also a matter of deeds or, as I explain in chapter 9, a matter of what the protocols command as well as how they command it. When protocols direct a researcher to do something which happens to be morally wrong – for example, subordinate, deceive, or even, as in the Nazi case, torture a subject – liberals think that the protocols are neutral, provided they do not include moral terms or morally condone or condemn the conduct. But the protocols are not neutral, for they favor one conception of the good over another and, in particular, a conception of the good which places expected social welfare over the welfare or autonomy of the participant subject. So long as they require the subordination of the respondents or experimental subjects, the protocols reduce the subjects’ capacity for self-determination and, somewhat ironically, oppose a conception of the good that, as I explained in chapter 1, is a basis for the liberal approach to the social sciences.

The conduct of experiments

The work of the social psychologist Stanley Milgram provides an interesting example of how commitment to the ideals of good data can prevent social scientists from recognizing the partisanship of their science. Some years ago, Milgram conducted a number of experiments to collect data about obedience to authority. The question he hoped to answer was how far his subjects would comply with instructions to cause others serious harm. According to Milgram, the data from his experiments show that there is no limit to how far subjects will comply, and, since he assumes that his data are externally valid, almost no limit to how far people will go before refusing to comply with the instructions of authorities. "It is the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority that constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation."

Milgram's research did not end with gathering the facts but went on to look for an explanation. His subjects' obedience, he found, could not
be explained by a failure to understand that the actions were wrong, for they obeyed commands even when they knew that what they were being commanded to do was wrong.

The force exerted by the moral sense of the individual is less effective than social myth would have us believe. Though such prescriptions as “Thou shalt not kill” occupy a pre-eminent place in the moral order, they do not occupy a correspondingly intractable position in human psychic structure... even the forces mustered in a psychological experiment will go a long way toward removing the individual from moral controls.\(^{42}\)

Milgram goes on to explain that the forces that cause individuals to obey commands, even when their conscience tells them otherwise, are a set of “binding factors” that lock the subject into his situation. The binding factors cause the subjects to attribute all initiative to the authority and to see themselves as instruments rather than agents. Such a mode of thinking — that only the authority is able to initiate an action — is, according to Milgram, “a fundamental mode of thinking for people once they are locked into a subordinate position in a structure of authority.\(^{43}\)

Although Milgram believes that psychological factors are among the binding factors, he does not believe that they are all of them, for the problem of obedience, he allows, is not wholly psychological. Social norms, such as politeness and deference to experts, discourage resistance to authorities, and the organization of work in the society limits a person’s responsibility to only small parts of any activity. These sociological factors make it easier for subjects to agree to do wrong or to hide from themselves the wrong they are doing.

Milgram’s experiments have been criticized for their use of deception and for having been carried out without the informed consent of the experimental subjects.\(^{44}\) His subjects were told lies about the experiment, and their consent to participate was not informed by a correct understanding of what they were being asked to do. Milgram is not indifferent to this deception. He allows that doing science should be constrained or limited by codes of ethics and that the use of deception is a legitimate ethical concern. However, he thinks that his deception was slight and that the harms were lessened by the briefing following the experiments and offset by the gains to science that came from his findings. He sees the manipulation of his subjects in the larger context of pursuing scientific knowledge, and in that larger context the harm looks slight to him. He does not see, as his critics do, that he is violating his subjects’ rights and that he is not a disinterested judge of the harm his experiments caused.

A social psychologist would wonder why Milgram did not see his experiment in a harsher light and might look for the “binding factors” that locked Milgram into his situation and caused him to attribute all initiative to the demands of science and to see himself as a handmaiden. Milgram explains that the human agent fades from the picture in his experiment and that the experiment acquires an impersonal momentum of its own: “The psychological laboratory has a strong claim to legitimacy and evokes trust and confidence in those who perform there.”\(^{45}\) However, he fails to see that the psychological laboratory has as strong a claim to legitimacy for him as it does for his subjects and evokes his trust and confidence as much as it does theirs, or that the causes of his own selective vision are not entirely psychological and include norms of the psychological laboratory. According to these norms, data are good even if collected using deceit and deception, and any harms caused to the subjects are offset by the truths the data are expected to reveal.

There is more at work in Milgram’s experiment than deceiving a subject. The experiments can help to increase the subjects’ indifference to moral considerations and strengthen their disposition to obedience. His experiments show, Milgram says, that “moral factors can be shunted aside with relative ease by a calculated restructuring of the informational and social field.”\(^{46}\) He ignores the fact, however, that they show this by shunting aside the moral concerns of his own experimental subjects with a calculated restructuring of their informational and social field. Moreover, he is unaware that his experiments restructure his own informational and social field and shunt his own moral concerns or inhibitions aside.

Milgram does not realize that the authority of science — the demands for reliable and valid data — places him in a position like the one in which he is placing his own subjects. He writes:

> Although a person acting under authority performs actions that seem to violate standards of conscience, it would not be true to say that he loses his moral sense. Instead, it acquires a radically different focus. He does not respond with a moral sentiment to the actions he performs. Rather the moral concern now shifts to a consideration of how well he is living up to the expectations that the authority has of him.\(^{47}\)

Milgram does not imagine that his words apply to himself and others who are engaged in doing social research, but they do. A researcher acting under some of the protocols for conducting experiments or interviews in
the social sciences performs actions that violate standards of conscience. The researcher does not lose his moral sense, but he shifts his moral focus. His concern shifts to how well he is living up to the standards of good science and to the expectations of the scientific community. His liberal views—his view that science and ethics are entirely heterogeneous—assure him that even if his ethics are questionable, his science is redoubtable.

Milgram forgets that he is one of the people who comes to perform in the laboratory and that the laboratory has as strong, if not stronger, a claim on him as on his subjects. An action such as deceiving someone, which in isolation appears wrong, acquires a totally different meaning when placed in the scientific setting. As Milgram says, “Allowing an act to be dominated by its context, while neglecting its human consequences, can be dangerous in the extreme.” The laboratory creates a context in which Milgram’s actions become so dominated by the ideals of good science that he minimizes their human consequences.

Milgram sees that the form and shape of society and the way it is developing influence a person’s responses to authority.

There was a time, perhaps, when men were able to give a fully human response to any situation because they were fully absorbed in it as human beings. But as soon as there was a division of labor among men, things changed. Beyond a certain point, the breaking up of society into people carrying out narrow and very special jobs takes away from the human quality of work and life. A person does not get to see the whole situation but only a small part of it, and is thus unable to act without some kind of over-all direction. He yields to authority but in doing so is alienated from his own actions.

The separation of the standards of good science from ethics and politics, the ideal of value-neutrality, is part of the development that Milgram is talking about. Our society is broken up into people carrying out pure research and people applying the findings in the service of some public or private interest in the clinic, school, factory, court, or legislature. Protocols of science are separated from codes of ethics. The separation helps the researchers to see what they want to see. They yield to the authority of their science and the ideal of neutrality and, in doing so, ignore the values that their practice is furthering or passing through.

According to Milgram, the factors that lead to immoral acts being carried out in the name of obedience include the devaluation of the victim. He is thinking of the violence against Jews by Nazi soldiers who were only carrying out their orders. However, he does not consider what in the structure of social life contributes to the devaluation of a subject. I am trying to show how the structure of social science contributes. Milgram, like the interviewer in directive interviews, devalues his subjects. His concerns or interests determine who knows, says, and does what, while the concerns or interests of his subjects are observed or measured but not allowed to control or influence the experiment. The design of the experiment encourages Milgram and his subjects to believe that they should be deferential and that the interests of science—as represented by the experimenter, the laboratory, the professional journal, and the research university—are more important than their own.

Using deception to move young college students to obey authority figures in psychological experiments may add to our knowledge, and Milgram maintains that it causes no great harm. But his judgment of harm is uninformed by any consideration of the subjects’ rights and is not backed by any data on the lasting effects of deception or submission to authority in scientific experiments. Playing the role of experimental subject may not influence how a person behaves outside the laboratory, but the role, even if limited to the laboratory, does contribute to a practice that Milgram and other social psychologists look upon with regret: that of blindly accepting and not questioning or resisting authority. Moreover, were participating subjects to question or resist authority in experiments or interviews in the social sciences, the data collected would not be good, for the experimenter or interviewer would no longer be able to follow his protocols and ensure that the data were reliable and valid.

Obedience and nonpartisanship

Milgram’s experiments were designed to yield reliable and valid data about obedience to authority that would reveal the causes of obedience and explain why many adults are willing to go to almost any lengths on the commands of those they perceive to be authorities. Obedience to authority is just one of many facts of social life that Milgram, as a social psychologist, might choose to study. His decision to study obedience is based on his assessment of the moral or political significance of obedience vis-à-vis the other facts that he might have chosen to study instead. Though personal values clearly influence the decision, most social scientists would say, following Weber, that this is a matter of value-relevance and that as long as Milgram does not include judgments of value in his findings, the research is free of his values and is value-neutral.

Milgram believes that, though obedience is a basic element in the structure of social life, blind obedience is morally and politically objectionable.
Placing his interest in obedience in the context of the Holocaust, he writes:

It has been reliably established that from 1933 to 1945 millions of innocent people were systematically slaughtered on command. Gas chambers were built, death camps were guarded, daily quotas of corpses were produced with the same efficiency as the manufacture of appliances. These inhumane policies may have originated in the mind of a single person, but they could only have been carried out on a massive scale if a very large number of people obeyed orders.44

The Nazi extermination of European Jews is the most extreme instance of the abhorrent immoral acts carried out by thousands of people in the name of obedience. Yet in lesser degree this type of thing is constantly occurring: ordinary citizens are ordered to destroy other people, and they do so because they consider it their duty to obey orders.55

Milgram intends his research to be relevant to his moral concerns, but he does not want his concerns to influence the conduct of his experiments; for if they do, then his data will not be good. "The legal and philosophic aspects of obedience are of enormous import, but an empirically grounded scientist eventually comes to the point where he wishes to move from abstract [moral] discourse to the careful [objective] observation of concrete instances."56 The protocols he adopts for conducting the experiments are intended to insure that his moral concerns will have no influence and that his data will present the facts of obedience as they are, rather than as we would prefer them to be.

However, in spite of his concern with the ordinary German citizens or soldiers who shunted moral considerations aside and acted in the name of obedience, his own obedience to good science led him to shunt aside moral considerations and deceive his own subjects and encourage them to blindly obey the orders of the experimenter. Ironically, he has to mock his own moral concerns and oppose the values which give his experiments their relevance in order to obey the ideals of his science.

Illiberal or perfectionist science does not require the researcher to alienate himself from his own social concerns or moral values. A researcher who is concerned, as Milgram was, to discourage blind obedience to authority but is committed to the perfectionist rather than the liberal approach could include his concerns in his research. He could educate his subjects about the problems of obedience and teach them to question or resist authority, including the authority of the experimenter and the psychological laboratory.

Of course, if Milgram were a devil, perfectionism would license his misdeeds. The protocols of his science could include inflicting misery on his subjects as a norm. Nothing in either liberal or perfectionist approaches to the social sciences assures that research will do more good than harm; but, on the perfectionist approach, doing good (according to some conception of the good) is an ideal of science and a measure of a scientist's data and the protocols she uses to gather them. On the perfectionist approach, doing good science and doing good overlap, and not by chance or as if by an invisible hand, but by design.

Conclusion

Data are the stuff of science. Science must have them, but must have them collected in the proper way. The proper way, on the liberal view, yields reliable and valid data and is free of moral, cultural, and political value. I have argued in this chapter that the protocols for acquiring reliable and valid data are not value-neutral and that, no matter what the scientists' intentions, their data are often partisan.

In seeking protocols that are nonpartisan, the liberal scientist has chosen some that permit — and may even require — moral wrongdoing in the service of science. Their liberal ideals permit or require them to engage in unethical practice but prohibit them from judging that the practice is unethical. To do good science, they must free their work of ethics and politics in word but may flout ethics or endorse politics in deed. The perfectionist approaches I describe in chapter 10 aim at being ethical and political in word and at backing up the words with deeds. According to these approaches, "good data" means, in part at least, data collected to advance some conception of the good or contribute to some ideal of human perfection; and, even when used in social science, "good" is to be seen as an overtly partisan term.

NOTES

2 S. A. Richardson, B. S. Dolenzewnd and D. Klein, Interviewing: Its Forms and Functions (Basic Books, 1963), p. 44.
3 Kidder, Selzitz Wrightman, p. 266.
4 Ibid., p. 186.
36 Ibid., p. 48.
37 Ibid., pp. 44-5.
40 S. Milgram, Obedience to Authority (Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 1-12.
41 Ibid., p. 5.
42 Ibid., p. 7.
43 Ibid., p. 9.
45 Milgram, Obedience, p. 9.
46 Ibid., p. 7.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., p. 11.
50 Ibid., p. 9.
52 Milgram, Obedience, p. 5.
53 Weber, Methodology, pp. 21-2 and 60-1.
54 Milgram, Obedience, p. 1.
55 Ibid., p. 2.
56 Ibid.

7 Sorting data into kinds

The facts gathered through interviews or experiments are sorted and organized. The subjects of these interviews and experiments are kinds of subjects. They are selected, observed, tested, or interviewed as subjects with a sexual preference, marital status, educational history, religious affiliation, occupation, income, wealth, or employment record. Sociologists who study suicide, stress, personality disorders, addiction, or depression among single and married adults over 65 sort their subjects by age, marital status, and state of mind. Political scientists who study the political party loyalty of Polish Americans and Irish Americans in a Presidential election sort theirs by political affiliation, ethnicity, and level of political interest.

Every social scientist sorts her subjects by one set or kinds or into one set of categories rather than another — for example, by race rather than sex, sex rather than class, or class rather than education — and chooses one definition of sex, race, class, or educational level over many possible others. The practice of sorting, I argue in this chapter, is not value-neutral. Nevertheless, Weber’s distinction between value-relevance and value-freedom does nothing to reveal or highlight the partisanship or role that values play in sorting the data and organizing the facts; for the selection of kinds is a matter neither of selecting a question to study nor of remaining silent on questions of value, but rather of deciding who the subjects of the study are and how they are to be represented.

My purpose in this chapter is to highlight the partisanship — to show how values influence the choice of kinds in the social sciences and how kinds play a role in normalizing human subjects and regulating social practice. First, however, I survey some recent discussions of natural kinds in science and consider whether any of the kinds in the social sciences are natural kinds. Second, I consider the claim that social scientists do not discover, but rather invent or construct, the categories or kinds into which they sort their data. Next, I explain how, in sorting their data