Misconceptions on the Role of the Social Sciences. A Reply

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> "...a man's value does not depend on whether or not he has leadership qualities. Those who most frequently think of themselves as leaders often qualify least as leaders"[1]

ABSTRACT
This contribution refers to the article of Leonard Bloom (vol 3 no 1, 1988) entitled "Social Science in Africa: Problems and Prospects". It is concerned with laying bear the pretensions of social scientists, arguing that social scientists cannot claim a privileged position with respect to practical skills, a special and separate body of scientific knowledge, or a clearly articulated role as social critic.

Introduction

In 'Social Science in Africa: Problems and Prospects' Bloom (1988) sets out to do two things: to examine "the delicate relationship of social science in Africa to the political, social and administrative context" and to show that social scientists must not "surrender the study of social problems to politicians and administrators" (p55). These aims prepare us for a descriptive sociology of the social sciences in Africa, together with an argument for the reasons why social scientists should become normatively involved in social problems, in Africa in particular. The relationship between the descriptive aspect of the paper and the normative position which it upholds is not made clear, but, presumably, the former is meant to support the latter.

It is the argument of this paper that Bloom achieves neither aim. His 'descriptive sociology' is inadequate, impressionistic and unsubstantiated by empirical evidence. His normative claims offer no good reason why social scientists should be seen as moral guardians and social critics. Instead, they give those hostile to the social sciences compelling reasons for intensifying their hostility. Furthermore, the paper suffers from logical defects which, on their own, are sufficient to disqualify his recommendations from serious consideration. I propose to examine these aspects of his paper in reverse order, starting with the problem of

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meaning and continuing with more general questions relating to his claims with respect to scientific and moral knowledge. This paper thus starts by considering specific matters which Bloom's work addresses and then widens out to address more general topics arising from it. I conclude with some recommendations.

The problem of intelligibility

The basic demand to make of an academic paper is that the thoughts, information and arguments it is designed to convey are presented in a comprehensive form. Although complex thoughts may not be easily expressible, they are seldom so complex that they cannot be expressed at all within the framework of ordinary language. A tendency, however, exists within social science writing to inflate complexity of ideas with obscurity of expression and to perceive in the latter evidence of the former. This error is exemplified in the paper under consideration.

Our resources in the matter of making ourselves intelligible are the structures of language itself, both syntactical and semantic, and the rules of argumentation. The requirement of clarity entails that careful attention is paid to the structure of the argument and to the relationship between the evidence presented and the inferences which may be drawn from it. It entails, as well, that the traditional 'laws of thought' ie the Principle of Identity, the Principle of Non-Contradiction and the Principal of the Excluded Middle are not breached (Copi,1987). Bloom's paper suffers from a lack of argumentative structure. It also very often offends against elementary logic, in ways to be described below.

General structure of argument

Bloom starts with the problem of social change. He asserts that, because social policies in Africa are predicated upon assumptions about society which are authoritarian in nature, social scientists should be moral critics of these policies and assumptions. He then offers two other normative positions which social scientists might take up, namely, that social science should be 'appropriate' with respect to the *content* of research and that social science must "remind governments and administrators of basic human needs and wants" (p59) and thus must "evaluate the extent and manner of the harm and welfare that programmes might bring about" (p60). The latter position is the one which Bloom favours.

. A mystifying section entitled "How shall the professions be scrutinised?" follows, in which he addresses a number of questions, none of which relates to the question of professional scrutiny, with respect either to internal professional standards, national or international, or the relationship between governments and the professions. He then suggests that the most serious barrier to the solution of social problems arises from "the ignorance and suspicion of both administrators and the general public towards the role and function of the social sciences". "Professional detachment", he says, "is often misinterpreted as implying indifference to social problems" (p64). He considers two ways in which the profession can avoid charges of elitism and the political risks which social scientists run by criticising social policies, but asserts that social scientists cannot avoid these risks any more than they can avoid their function of 'social reformer'

With astonishing naivete he asserts that social scientists must recognise that they are on the 'side' of "the people who will be in need of social sciences when the temporary government has gone" (p66). Finally, Bloom says that "Africa needs the social sciences" because "governments cannot even begin to solve [social, economic and political] problems without adequate statistics and policy analysis". Social scientists furthermore can actually help governments without seeking to legitimate them.

These concluding sentiments are undeniably worthy although neither new nor startling, and (as I shall argue) not true. What is startling, however, is that Bloom evidently sees no need to support his assertions either with evidence or with argument, or both. His conclusion rests instead on a series of disconnected descriptions of empirical reality and unargued normative assertions which are built around a loose and uncritical review of what are apparently social psychology texts. These statements and conclusions depict, according to him, the role and function of social science together with the content and consequences of social change and social policy in Africa. None of these statements, however, are grounded in reference to empirical fact. This is paradoxical, for he seems to think that social scientists are entitled to play social critic because a superior understanding of social problems and their solutions derives from a superior grasp of the facts of social life. However, he demonstrates at no point in this paper that he himself, or any other social scientist, possesses these qualities.

Flaws in the structure

Detailed examination of the text bring to light painful flaws of reasoning. One third of the section entitled 'Social policy and human needs' is taken up with the notion that social sciences be 'appropriate'. This is a normative assertion about what ought to be the content of social science and does not, therefore, address the empirical or conceptual question of what human needs are. Questions of appropriateness and questions of needs are, of course, compatible, in the sense that they do not contradict each other. But the fact that they do not operate within the same conceptual categories makes this true statement almost perfectly trivial.

Moreover, his list of 'basic human needs' is not a list of needs at all. How, for instance, can the "nature of an attitude", or "the quality of relationships between males and females" be human needs? Similarly, questions about how group decisions are made and the nature of "a collective view of reality" are not and cannot be answers to the question, "if there are such things at all, what are basic human needs?" Bloom's failure to understand that this is a conceptual or empirical question makes nonsense of his otherwise sober belief that social scientists could "evaluate the extent and manner of the harm and the welfare inflicted upon people by social policies". For, if we understand this recommendation to mean, at least in part, that social scientists study the effects of social policies in terms of their damage to or fulfilment of basic human needs, Bloom's unintelligibility about what those needs actually are renders the programmatic recommendation itself unintelligible.

Sub-sections of this paper are equally unintelligible. The paragraph (p58) dealing with distinctions between types of radicals who are unfavourably compared to the "truly independent critic" fails to make internal sense or to advance the general argument which appears to be concerned with whether or not social scientists can, or should, cast themselves in the role of

moral critic. His discussion of the desirability of international professional recognition (p66) is incoherent. For although the two arguments he raises against the value of such recognition are reasonably compelling, he inexplicably and with no further argument reaches the opposite conclusion that such recognition may, after all, be useful. This is a classical case of an elementary self-contradiction, which is defined as a necessarily invalid argument that is false whatever the truth-value of its variables. It thus offends against one of the laws of thought.

Sentential Meaning

It might be thought that the above points are not representative of the work as a whole. But even at the most elementary level, sentential meaning is often absent. One is at a loss to understand, for example, what the following assertion could possibly mean: "To speak of the Third World as though it were a hospice, is to shrink the psychological horizons of our contemporaries. It disqualifies four billion human beings as a future generation" (p63). A hospice is 'a home for the destitute' according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. It is hard to see why this image of the Third World is completely illegitimate, given the type of publicity which the Third World promotes for itself, its constant calls for aid and anxieties about bankruptcy. Indeed, Bloom's own characterisation of our problems does little to modify such an image. What does it mean to say that such a view shrinks the psychological horizons of our contemporaries, even assuming that we know what 'psychological horizons' are? To whom does the possessive pronoun refer and how does such shrinkage take place - and in whose mind? And how, furthermore, can such a view *disqualify* people as a *generation*, whether current or future?

Consider, finally, this tautology which is not only empty of substantive content but lacks explanatory force: "The growing alienation of individuals....that arises from depersonalisation of changes..." (p67). Where 'alienation' is semantically equivalent to 'depersonalisation' the actual meaning of the statement reduces to a trivial and non-explanatory 'alienation arises from alienation arising from change'.

Truth and beliefs

The question of meaning and intelligibility is relevant to a consideration of the truth of Bloom's positive claims. Philosophy teaches us that a minimal requirement for a proposition to qualify as true is that it is intelligible. Meaningless proposition cannot be adjudicated as truth claims. However, the overall thrust of Bloom's paper is not totally meaningless, it is comprehensible in that many of his views derive from standard positions held in main-stream social science and are therefore a familiar part of the orthodox legitimating beliefs of the social sciences, both academic (devoted to research and analysis and to the development of theory) and practical (devoted to on-the-ground solving of social problems, whether as advisors to governments, aid agencies or private corporations, or as social workers, psychiatrists and so on).

One way of examining these legitimate beliefs is to ask for their grounds. Another, more orthodox, way is to challenge the empirical evidence which substantiates the claims. A third

is to question the moral position from which they stem either on epistemological or moral grounds. The latter is the technique Bloom himself uses when attacking the view that social science cannot help to solve problems in Africa. My own critique of orthodox beliefs in the utilitarian practical value of social science follows the first position outlined above and rests on the following grounds:

(1)   Social scientific knowledge in the required sense. In many instances social problems are best solved by common sense. Knowledge in the social sciences is not scientific in the same way as in the natural sciences.

(2)   Social scientists are not better qualified than non-social scientists to make ethical criticisms and judgments, either of what is the case or of what ought to be the case.

(3)   Thus specific notions about the nature of social problems in Africa, the corruption (or pathology) of African leaders, and the social position and role of social scientists in the field and in academia, do not qualify as knowledge-claims but only as opinions. These relationships can be (and have been) very differently characterised. The value of every such characterisation depends upon the sophistication of the theory underpinning it.

(4)   Notions about the specific role which social scientists have to play in the social development of African countries lack substance, since they develop from beliefs which, although commonly shared, are not for that reason necessarily true. They are, for other reasons, flawed.

The possibility of a positive social scientific knowledge of the social world is predicated upon two assumptions: firstly, that there is a unitary and universal scientific method, and secondly that such knowledge is cumulative and objectively, ie indisputably, true. It is commonplace in the philosophy of natural as well as social science that these assertions are not true[2].There is neither an agreed methodology nor an agreed theory within one social science discipline, let alone across disciplinary boundaries (Giddens,1982).

A glance at any undergraduate textbook in sociology, for example, demonstrates that there are many different and competing perspectives from which social scientists pursue their trade. The possibility, therefore, of a unified cumulative and comparative social knowledge is remote. Like those on the political left, social theorists are distinguished more by their internecine difference than they are by their unity in the face of challenge. This fact alone gives us one empirical reason for doubting the positivist belief in the unity of science. Another is the fact that positivism itself has been steadfastly attacked by contemporary philosophers of science, often appealing to scientific theory and practice for justification (Giddens,1976; Hughes,1980).

Furthermore, it is widely held that theory and method are not independent of description (Hanson,1955). Perceptions are not theory-free. No description can therefore be completely untheoretical, for what we perceive is already to some extent constituted for us by theory. In just the same way, no theoretical statement is methodologically innocent, for methodological statements in part constitute our theoretical statements by prior rulings which determine, for example, those aspects of problems and solutions which are to be considered problematic or relevant. Theory and method thus have normative implications (Kuhn,1987), being constructed according to certain evaluations. This is especially true with respect to the human sciences.

Embedded within the heart of social theory are nests of normative assumptions about human nature, about what is and what is not morally desirable and what, therefore, ought or ought not to be done to promote such valued states of affairs (Hollis,1977).

Methodological assumptions provide constraints upon the kinds of descriptions we may make (Dancy,1985), as descriptions are selected in the light of methodological considerations just as research techniques (confusingly called 'methodologies' by some social scientists) arise from methodological considerations which are at base themselves normative.

A number of consequences arise from all this. The first is the futility of asking for, or expecting, a unified body of social knowledge to which social scientists have privileged access. The second is the importance of recognising the role of common sense in the solution of social problems. The third is the fruitlessness of postulating, as Bloom does, the possibility of an 'indigenous' social science emerging from a 'universal' methodology. I shall discuss the two latter points briefly in turn.

Common-sense and social science

The basis of all knowledge is, as Russell (1950) rightly points out, commonsense. Knowledge, of course, exists in the social sciences. But it is characterised by fragments of specialised descriptions, hypotheses and speculations, most of which do not speak to each other, operating as they do from within different domains of discourse. Beyond these fragments lies the ancient, unsystematic and often contradictory body of ordinary beliefs about the natural, social and supernatural world which we call common-sense and which is available to specialist and non-specialist alike. Common-sense is largely characterised by a pragmatic and utilitarian interest in praxis. This interest in praxis forms the subject-matter of social science but common-sense has not been transcended by scientific investigation - except, perhaps, when common-sense itself is made the subject of sociological investigation (Douglas,1971; Dreitzel,1970; Goffman,1974; and others).

Ordinary professional practitioners, architects, doctors, lawyers, nurses, planners, teachers, agriculturalists and engineers, as well as economists, community and social workers, have views and opinions on the nature of social problems and on how they could be solved. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that most professionals and many non-professionals, including those who are not in 'caring professions', operate, in Africa at least, within an atmosphere of crisis and with a clear and articulated common-sense knowledge of the social, political and economic importance of their actions. The contribution which they all have made to development stems, however, as much from ordinary common-sense as from an allegiance to science[3].

It is salutary to find the diverse professions which are presented and increasingly recruited in Africa to study social problems and provide solutions for them. Professionals without a social science background are not, of course, omniscient concerning either the implications or the consequences of their work. To this extent they cannot pretend to apply objectively true scientific knowledge to problems. They believe, however, that common-sense, experience and a liberal human sympathy make it possible for them to identify problems and, having identified them, to select possible ways of solving them. Their 'solutions' are not always, and indeed seldom, successful. But it is not unjust to call this application of mind to social problems 'the experimental method', and to recognise that there is a properly heuristic

scientificity about trial and error. This practical attitude to social problems is different only in degree and not in kind from the spirit with which successful social scientists plie their trade. In matters of common-sense and human sympathy, therefore, the social scientist is in no dramatically privileged position.

The social scientist who is loathe to recognise this should be faced with the truth: that social scientists themselves are equally not omniscient; and that social scientific solutions to problems are no more successful than any other. This is true with respect to the identification of social problems as much as it is to finding solutions for them. For what count as social problems are just as often formulated by the interests of governments, international agencies and international economic, political and military interests as by our own interests and experience as individual thinkers and agents. The way in which social problems are identified is therefore in itself of sociological interest, for it is part of the phenomena which it is the business of social science to study.

Orthodox social scientists display a touching but misplaced faith in the ability of social scientists to use statistics and do survey research. Often, it appears, it is this ability, rather than sophisticated theoretical understanding, which is used to legitimate the belief in the superiority of social scientific knowledge. But we are all well aware that many who are not social scientists can easily equip themselves with social research techniques, especially those of statistical analysis. These, in any case, are not generic to social science, having initially been pirated by social scientists from other disciplines. Nor is it universally agreed, even within social science, that statistical analysis is a useful tool for capturing empirical reality. They are, furthermore, at the level required for the analysis of social problems, quite simple and easily acquired.

Social scientists, whether sociologists, psychologists or economists, whether theorists or practitioners, engage in massive self-delusion if they believe they posses a definitive and esoteric body of knowledge which would make it possible for them to solve social problems. Such a body of knowledge does not exist. The more desperately academic social scientists try to justify their discipline by tailoring their interests to social problems and the more extravagant their claims of their own competence in this area, the less use the world will have for social science at all. The claims, therefore, that social scientists can help governments by virtue of their superior grasp of the facts and because they can monitor social and psychological tensions and develop effective forms of participation which encourage individual autonomy, are not only simply false. They are also damaging, because they cannot be fulfilled, to the survival of these disciplines.

Indigenous content

Similarly false is the belief in the possibility of a universal theory and methodology being applied to a specific and indigenous content. If the propositions sketched above are true, then content is totally interdependent with theory and method. If there were such a thing as a unified theory, then content would be similarly universal in scope. If, as I have argued, there is no one universal theory and methodology, then the content is similarly fragmented and cannot be cumulative except within a particular method. In either case the universality on non-universality of content depends not upon peculiar geographical, historical or even cultural considerations, but on the constraints and possibilities of the theory being used. It is a form

of naive realism which imagines that theory is dictated by the furniture of the world. In either case it is futile to postulate a specifically African social science.

Ethical knowledge

The moral ambiguities

There is a serious ambiguity about the way in which social scientists conceive of their moral role. On the one hand they believe, as Bloom does, that it is their moral duty as social scientist to criticise governments, to subvert, to engage in political activity and to operate as social reformers. But because governments pay the salaries of academics the latter must *conceal* their moral aims by proclaiming 'an allegiance to the scientific approach'. This recommendation therefore amounts to suggesting that social scientists protect themselves from criticism by lying about the scope of their work. If social scientists engage in such subterfuge, it is hard to see why anyone should think they are morally superior to ordinary mortals, for truth-telling is regarded by many philosophers as the foundation of morality. This ambiguity about ethics lies at the heart of social scientific training and may be held responsible for the unselfconsciousness which is often the hallmark of social scientists.

It is perhaps the very wildest of all assertions that social scientists should or could, in any society, provide its ethical leadership. This could be true only if at least one of the following propositions were true:
(1)   that social scientists are not, and do not have to be, specifically trained in ethical theory since this training is part of the corpus of social science itself.
(2)   that social scientists are trained in ethical theories, and that one ethical theory is agreed to be true
(3)   that ethical solutions flow automatically from a correct description of empirical fact.
I propose to argue that all three propositions are false.

Ethics in the training of social scientists

Firstly, in no social science undergraduate course known to me does a course in ethics even figure, let alone form a compulsory component. Social scientists seldom, if ever, receive specific training in philosophical ethics. Few social scientists, I imagine, opt for ethics courses at post-graduate level. We must recognise that the rise of the social sciences was in part predicated upon ambivalent, if not hostile, attitudes to moral philosophy. This ambivalence is routinely, albeit unconsciously, passed on to each generation of students. Sociological training, for example, inculcates in the student a belief that morality is a social human product which contributes to the normative control of individuals within society. It is, therefore, culturally specific. If not merely beneficial to the social group as a whole, as in functionalist and Durkheimian theory, moral control is ideological, as in Marxist theory. Moral control, like religious control, is a mechanism which compensates for or neutralises the conflicts and problems of class society. The whole notion of 'the good' is therefore, in either view, false, if 'the good' is taken to mean that which transcends social and cultural situations and has

universal application.

The above statements can be characterised as an attempt to dissolve morality into science; to transform or reduce pronouncements concerning what men ought to do into what, in fact, they do do, what they believe, and why, given their beliefs, their actions are rational. If, however, we believe all this, then we must accept that individual social scientists, as social beings, also necessarily partake in socially-constructed moral beliefs which are themselves normative and ideological. We cannot, therefore, from within the sociological paradigm, challenge the morality of social practices. At every point when positivism interlocks with the human sciences, moral proscriptions are de-legitimised in favour of the explanation of facts and the discovery of social laws.

The social scientist is, however, professionally committed, even if not to the study of those problems officially designated as 'social' problems, to critique (Geuss,1981). Critique of social institutions is essentially a normative activity. Hence, as normative critique must issue from a commitment to a particular moral theory, we are entitled to ask from what standpoint social scientific critique emanates. This is not a question which the social scientist is trained to answer except with the most general of statements, for example 'I am on the side of the people', 'I'm for justice', 'I believe in freedom'. The notion that critique must emanate from a clear normative position is in conflict with the idea that social science is both neutral and universal, thus transcending the socially constructed nature of particular moralities. It is obvious, therefore, that if they feel (as they must) professionally committed to critique, they must make do with the moral sensibility indistinguishable from the common-sense morality, that is one which is in no way more sophisticated than that of the ordinary professional - even the ordinary professional politician and policy-maker.

The properly selfconscious practitioners ought to recognise that, just as they cannot afford to be naive about theory or about 'facts', they cannot be naive about ethics. Critique proceeds from a normative commitment, just as description proceeds from a theoretical and methodological commitment. If social scientists have no training in technical thought, then they have no particular competence in making moral evaluations of social practices or grounds for critique, and therefore have no particularly important role to play in either the identification of, or the solution to, social problems. The tension between the aims of classical sociological theory, which sought to replace moral indignation and ethnocentric evaluations with non-normative and scientific description, and social critique is evident. What is, however, just as evident, is that social scientists are not equipped for the task of critique. For normative critique requires some kind of foundation in moral philosophy.

A universally agreed ethics

If social scientists, however, were required to follow courses in ethics, they might feel even more uncomfortable about critique. For the question 'how should one live?' is one which has no agreed answer. Utilitarianism, for example, the favoured moral theory of the nineteenth century, is much in dispute: but not refuted (Smart and Williams,1974). Similar levels of dispute surround deontological moral theories like Kantian and neo-Kantian ones (Hudson,1983; Williams,1985) equally passionate disputes surround Marxism and its status

as moral theory (Lukes,1985). A foundation in moral theory will not help the social scientist except to increase the sophistication and consistency of ethical commitments. This does not ensure that they are true. If social scientists do not know the answer to the question 'how should one live' they have no privileged role to play in providing ethical answers to social problems.

The 'is' and the 'ought'

It may be said that there is no need to study ethics formally, since those who are competent to describe the world are similarly competent to pass moral judgment upon it, that is to say, those who know what the world is like also know how to improve upon it. This amounts to asserting that the 'ought' follows from the 'is'. I have already raised doubts about the scope of knowledge claims in the social sciences. There are further objections to this notion. Hume (1888) demonstrated that there is no logical relationship between these two categories of judgment. Naive assertions to the contrary do not amount to a refutation of Hume. Such a claim therefore remains empty. Until social scientists take ethics seriously, therefore, their works are unlikely to provide any kind of salient critique of which policy-makers or non-social scientists will take notice.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to lay bare the pretensions of social scientists, pretensions which are exemplified in Bloom's paper. I have tried to show that in so far as formal competence is concerned, social scientists cannot claim a privileged position either with respect to practical skills, to a special and separate body of scientific knowledge, or to a clearly articulated role as social critic. It is incumbent upon us to distinguish between a clear ethical position and the moral indignation and self-righteousness which many social scientists offer as a substitute. Social scientists must therefore recognise that, all in all, what they have to offer in the field of social problems is rather less than is supposed. I can, therefore, see no reason in particular why governments in Africa or elsewhere should pay more attention to social scientists than to other professionals, both indigenous and foreign. This does not mean, however, that social science should be abandoned, unless we think it is exhausted by a commitment to solving social problems.

To those of us who value the social sciences, and wish to promote them, the first and essential task is to refrain from fruitless and premature self-aggrandisement, or attempts to solve social problems which can be tackled by other means. Social scientists are supposed to be engaged in scientific inquiry. This requires that academics in Africa, as elsewhere, examine the foundational beliefs, the theories and the methods of social science and investigate what, if any, possibilities of arriving at both factual and moral truth are offered by social science[4.] By focusing upon the justification of social science we may be able to determine the scope and limitations of these disciplines and, thus, their possibilities. This enterprise is one which should engage at least as much energy as actual empirical description and on-the-ground problem solving. Science, theory and methodological questions concern

all social scientists and should not be delegated to universities in Europe. This entails that we take the trouble to acquaint ourselves with the philosophical works which have a bearing on our activities and purposes. We should, in addition, ensure that we ourselves and our students do not succumb to flabby and discredited philosophical and theoretical positions, nor pretend that our trivial and common-sense observations, beliefs and actions are in some important way 'scientific'. One useful antidote against such temptation is, I believe, to engage in a debate about the relationship between science and common sense.

I reiterate that, as social scientists, we have as yet nothing special to offer towards the characterisation, observation or solution of social problems. To believe otherwise is to undermine our general claim that social science is different from common sense: different in terms of subject-matter, of rigour, of a devotion to truth-seeking and a hostility to unselfconscious ideological thought. To take ourselves and our own discipline more seriously is to start by asking what solutions make scientific, rather than common, sense and how, if at all, social science can offer a valuable alternative to common sense. The alternative is to allow ourselves to be swept into helpless, anti-intellectual and emotional responses to our subject-matter, which rightly earn us derision from our peers. The scientific commitment requires something more rigorous than common-sense from us all.

None of what I have said above should be taken to imply that social scientists have no role to play in the attempt to solve social problems. Of course we do, and of course we cannot help becoming emotionally engaged. As ordinary agents with ordinary interests, our common-sense normative commitment does and must engage our sympathies. When we act upon these commitments we are sometimes successful, sometimes not: we fight for and win, or lose, causes. As social workers we defend our clients. As teachers we try to promote rational, autonomous and humane thought. As economists we attempt to promote greater equality of distribution of wealth. As feminists we agitate for the rights of women. And so on. But this contribution to solving social problems is different only in degree from that of the liberal radical non-social scientist. All this is true for all social scientists regardless of where they live and work. It is incorrect to characterise the relation between the social sciences and the rest of the world as a specifically African problem, for what the social sciences can achieve in Africa is precisely what they achieve - or fail to achieve - elsewhere in the world. The contribution to social problems, therefore, which we can make is on all fours with the contribution which non-social scientists can make. That is to say, it is not our position *qua* social scientist which legitimates our involvement in social problems, but our status as fellow human beings.

FOOTNOTES

(1) Weber M (1948) "Science as a Vocation" in *From Max Weber*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, p150.

(2) Collingwood R G (1933) *An Essay in Philosophical Method*, OUP, Oxford; also Hanson N R (1958) *Patterns of Discovery*, CUP, Cambridge; Kuhn T (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed, University of Chicago Press; Hughes J (1980) *The Philosophy of Social Research*, Longmans.

(3) Journals such as *New Scientist*, *National Geographic*, *Southern African Economist*, UN Publications. Also recruitment of workers by Aid agencies, the World Bank, Ford Foundation; where social scientists are not represented to the exclusion of other professionals.

(4) Wittgenstein L   (1976)   **Philosophical Investigations,** II, p232: "The confusion and barrenness of psychology is not to be explained by calling it a 'young science'...For in *psychology there are experimental methods and conceptual confusion...* The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problems and method pass one another by".

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