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BETWEEN NEUTRALITY AND CONVICTION:

THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA

AS A FORM OF SOCIAL AWARENESS

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Prepared for the

1970 CICOP CONFERENCE

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Published by:
Division for Latin America, U.S.C.C.
Box 6066
Washington, D. C. 20005

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The length of this paper's title ought to make further explanation of what it will treat unnecessary. Still, let us offer some brief introduction.

Presuming that a number of those who hear or read this paper will have no great knowledge of how the social sciences developed in Latin America, let us give the outlines of that process.

By social sciences (taking them broadly, and including "social thought," which may or may not deserve inclusion), we mean one of the forms taken by society's understanding of itself. As we shall explain later, we insert that understanding into the total social context that determines it. Then, from a "history of ideas" we shall go on to "history" by itself, the only level on which the process of thought really becomes intelligible and takes on meaning for its actor, social man.

At that point, we can turn to the question of the social sciences today in our continent, as a study whose purpose is to maintain or transform the present reality. The conclusions we reach at this level of analysis will bring us, finally, to elucidate certain questions that the social sciences in Latin America must ask of the social

sciences as practiced elsewhere, especially in the United States.

In view of the special nature of this CICOP conference, we shall try to avoid technical issues and academic fine points. We can only hope that we have succeeded. The conference participants will have to pardon us for not having completely eliminated that moat we can all so easily detect when it is in someone else's eye.

I. There has been in Latin America a more or less systematic study of society ever since the years when independence was won. Before leaving this preliminary stage that we can call pre-sociology, let us examine some of the characteristics these disciplines were still displaying, right up to the moment of their academic consolidation.

Germani (1959) pointed out three essential traits in the social sciences: a social realism, i. e., the intention of seeing social reality as it is, in order to transform it (in those years, perhaps we should have said "to construct it"); its character as thought, a philosophical reflection intimately bound up with life, rather than a science in the strict sense of that word; and literary emphasis, which demanded a style quite different from what scientific work normally expects, with the attendant risk of having form become more important than content. In addition to these three traits there were others, borrowed from sociology (predominant in those years among the nascent social sciences) as it was being developed in the various university facilities.

The first important influence that appeared in the European beginnings of sociology strictly so called was that of positivism, under whose aegis many of the upper-level teaching centers where sociology was to flourish were created and developed. Between the last quarter of the past century and the first of our century, chairs of sociology were set up in a number of Latinamerican universities. As this process of growth and institutionalization of sociology took place, other intellectual currents - some in harmony with, some hostile to positivism - came on the scene. Before examining them, let us review briefly the special characteristics of that period, in which later differences were already being shaped.

As we observed, the introduction of positivism antedated by a few years the establishment of chairs of sociology; in fact, not a few of them were founded directly under its impulse. But it blended with an earlier trend that was opposed to the "principle-based" rationalism that had in those countries ruled supreme before. Instead of considering the organization of national societies as a mere application of universally admitted "principles," there was a tendency now to look for the characteristics of each national reality as a peculiar, distinct thing, in order to determine in the light of them the most "realistic" forms of organization to follow. This social realism (cf. Povina, 1959, pp. 32ss.) offered a matrix within which positivism could be readily applied. The over-arching importance that was attributed to law in the organization of society explains why so many

of the earliest chairs of sociology were established in faculties of juridical sciences--and indeed were strictly subordinated to them. Later, the same subordination took place with regard to faculties of philosophy and education; even later, despite long-standing antagonisms, they were included under chairs of economics. From another point of view, the stress on social realism led to the creation of university chairs of, and a not inconsequential bibliography on, "national and American sociology," in which conceptual categories borrowed from the sociology of foreign countries were used (even if only provisionally) in the study of the local social reality.

Germani (1959) enumerates a series of important circumstances in the growth of sociology in this period that we offer here in extenso because of their relevance:

" 1) In general, holding a university chair was not an exclusive profession; it was often a part-time activity coupled with another, principal profession; 2) occupying it won principally social prestige and intellectual satisfaction, at least for those genuinely interested in the discipline being taught; 3) chairs in law faculties, and also to some extent in philosophy defaculties, were occupied not only by professionals at law, but also by public officials and prominent politicians; 4) no great stress was laid on the specializations of candidates for teaching posts, particularly for disciplines not considered "technical," and this practice was especially frequent in the field of sociology....

What usually happened was that the professor's training had not been given in sociology, but in other disciplines, principally if they were relevant to some professional training; 5) even full-time professors usually had to teach in several fields; this was a consequence of the low level of salaries, which obliged them to take on two or even three posts; 6) finally, the type of social structure the professors proposed usually reflected that of their own social strata; most of them-or all-came from the upper class; candidates from the growing middle class had scant chance, and those from the lower classes had practically none" (pp. 42-43).

Against this background, we can imagine the sociology of that period. Let us portray it in more detail, following principally the outline given by Germani.

First of all, we must point out the vagueness of limit between this discipline and other similar ones: law, philosophy, especially history. The lack of specialization, in those who practiced the discipline as well as in the discipline itself--had unfortunate effects on the value of the results it produced.

Sociological research was relatively backward for many reasons, including the literary pretensions of the classical "ensayismo." This defect was to become more accentuated as antipositivist currents were introduced, most of them connected with the intuitionist theories that Windelband and Rickert were launching, under the aegis of Dilthey, for studying social phenomena. Once sociology is classified with

Geisteswissenschaften (sciences of the spirit, as opposed to Naturwissenschaften, or natural sciences, it can never be expected to provide universally valid and general truth, but only knowledge of a particular thing in its concrete totality. And this knowledge, to be had only through Erlebnis (vital experience), does not give a true explanation (Erklärung), but only an understanding (Verstehen) of an intuitive type.

But when intuition became respectable as a method - thanks to such hollow, merely verbal reasons - the road was wide open for personal inspiration, which was already latent in the "thought" and "literary emphasis" of the pre-sociological period. The idea was not to use intuition as a heuristic device, useful for proposing hypotheses that later would be subjected to empirical testing; rather, intuition was taken as valid for its own intrinsic reasons of validity. The Latin inclination to accept light, elegant and probably untenable reasoning was thus legitimated and raised to the level of a science. This methodological approach was most unlikely to produce social sciences worthy of the name. The distance between social science and philosophy was reduced to almost zero, and on top of that the philosophy in question carried in itself all the irrationalist germs of dogmatism, fundamentalism and infallibility that are incompatible with a rightly understood social science.

With such a situation, which has yet not been completely corrected, there began to appear about the 1950's new trends, bearing the promise of building at last an authentic social science. Its sponsors

were often international, and were the first evidences of it found in Brazil and Chile, under UNESCO initiative. In addition, a growing number of specialists were being formed in certain foreign centers, notably the United States. They were to bring home a renewed and renewing literature that was thoroughly scientific. A future was thus opened - especially for the social sciences, clearly differentiated from one another, as organized in the better teaching and research centers of the developed countries. It was the end of "ensayismo" and of "national sociologies" out of touch with the world-wide growth of science that had resulted from the interfecundation of European and Northamerican traditions.

To describe these social sciences as sciences, let us quote a well-known Northamerican author, a typical representative of the theoretical and methodological currents we have been referring to: Harry M. Johnson (1965). According to him, a discipline is scientific if it is: 1) empirical, i. e., based on observation and reasoning, not on supernatural revelation, and when its results are not merely speculative. In the early stages of their work, all scientists speculate, of course; but ideally at least, they then submit their speculations to the test before announcing them as scientific discoveries; 2) theoretical, i. e., it endeavors to boil down its complex observations into abstract and logically related propositions that explain causal relations in the object studied; 3) accumulative, i. e., the sociological theories are built one upon another, so that later theories correct,

extend and refine the earlier ones; 4) a-moral, i. e., sociologists do not ask which social actions are good or bad; they simply try to explain them" (p. 23).

It is easy to see the contradiction between this was of conceiving social science and the one that had prevailed in the Latin-american tradition. Who can be surprised, then, that the new approach was accepted slowly, against resistance and not always immediately? The academic centers where it has won out are probably in the minority, especially among those not exclusively dedicated to teaching and research in the social sciences. In these latter, which are for the most part recently founded centers, the picture tends to be quite the reverse; the "truly scientific" social sciences, as their defenders call them, are in the majority. To the extent that research is done mainly at these centers, often with government or international grants, the new type of social science centers are winning the day.

Just as it seems to be victorious, though, the social science imported from the highly developed countries is being questioned from other angles and subjected to a more bitter challenge. It is easy to confuse this imported sort with the older variety, and both the defenders of the pure social sciences and their critics occasionally get mixed up, thus muddying the waters. We shall try to clarify what is happening, for that brings us precisely to the heart of our subject matter. For that we will have to leave the history of ideas we have followed so far, and look into history as such.

II. If one reads a manual of methodology, one could get the impression that it contains nothing but immutable truths from some timeless region where all is perfect, absolute and permanent. As if the human task of learning were to be structured, ordered and measured by an unchanging trans-history. Yet we cannot help suspecting that something is wrong in such an impression. Men's ideas develop within a concrete history, like their masterpieces of art or artisanship. And just as the art and artisanship reveal by their form and content the history of the period of their origin, we may presume that similar traces may be apparent in the great intellectual constructions and methodological tools of science. That presumption will be our guide as we now examine how social science as such was originally shaped in the academic halls of the United States and how it later was extended to the more advanced research and teaching centers of Latin America.

The method of this social science was worked out along lines that had proved so successful in the physical sciences--and in many cases with the hope that a social technology, scientifically grounded and as successful as the one that had worked so well in the physical sciences, could be achieved here too. The hope and purpose were most laudable, for the mutual interfecundation of sciences had often had felicitous results. But if such results are to be more than a flash in the pan, the interfecundating sciences must be rather fully developed. At least, their goals, limitations and what they are going to look for

in adjacent areas must be clearly defined. What occurred, however, was that when "sociology considered collaborating with other disciplines, it did so without knowing exactly what it could contribute or expect in return. Sociology was not always sure, in fact, why it needed anything from outside. And so it often happened that it misused what was offered, or ignored it, or was so dazzled by the lights issuing from more highly evolved sciences that, as if seduced, it quite forgot its own self" (Tiryakian, 1969, p. 18).

To demonstrate exactly how this worked out would take a lot of time. A few cases, however, will be illustrative. 1) The adoption of the notions "system," "structure" and "function," borrowed by analogy from biology, opened up interesting possibilities for the study of total societies; yet the necessary precautions were not taken in applying the analogy, and in a great number of instances it served only to extend the prestige of science to extremely conservative political conclusions. 2) The need to impose controls on each variable in the experiments led, in other cases, to focusing on very simple objects, far removed from the complexity of any objective social situation, to arrive finally at the most banal of conclusions, probably no more helpful than what common sense might have guessed. This sin of irrelevance is committed often enough in social psychology, but it happens in the other social sciences too. 3) The quest for accumulativity invites the construction of a universal social science, so that any particular

experiment or study carried out in any corner of the globe can falsify universal theoretical systems. In this way, a great amount of Latinamerican research is far removed from the concrete history of the society it pretends to study, and offers little insight into it. We could give a great many other examples, but these three will have to suffice.

All these developments did not take place by accident, nor do they derive from the abstract growth of scientific ideas, removed from all contact with social reality. If social science was thus shaped in the United States and at a given moment in the history of that country, it is because along with that constant project of men working together that society is, there is also to be found a self-understanding that the society produces.

Let us review now some of the conclusions we have reached. Society is conceived as a system: a concrete, structured total in which each element is functionally related to the others and to the total, and which contributes (positively or negatively) to the maintenance of a desired equilibrium. At this point, however, several problems arise. First: who is the actor--or actors-- in this behavior system? Sociological analysis goes no farther than the level of role: "The function or expected behavior of an individual in a group, usually defined by the group or the culture" (Earp, in Pratt Fairchild, 1959, p. 262). Social psychology apparently goes farther, but not much: its function is to analyze the relation

between what is social and what is organic. But a gap is thus opened to let escape something that we consider fundamental: those concrete men, of flesh and blood, with their own names and biographies, who love and hate, suffer and rejoice, live and die each day while they make history--and are made by it. Man is thus ousted from the sciences concerning man; the system itself, as an abstract entity, is the actor in the behavior under investigation.

Let us go a step farther. The system's values are what defines the goals toward which social behavior moves, and the normal way to achieve those values is determined by the expectations that make up the system, precisely as a system of roles. Unforeseen behavior is (in a statistical sense, first of all) deviant, aberrant. It is easy to go on and conclude that the system's values are the only admissible ones. The great majority of the academic establishment's students and researchers have drawn that conclusion.

But who is to determine which are the dominant values? The system itself, is the first answer: a rational society should therefore stop all the metaphysical discussions about values and stick to opinion polls made according to approved methodological norms. The system thus grinds out the very mechanisms it needs to survive indefinitely. That will be the end of history: we will have reached the millennium and the ultimate society. We may still have to make minor adjustments and settle very limited problems

of adaptation to our physical ambience or corrections in the machine as new individuals are incorporated into society.

We still have not reached the answer to our question, though. How, through what processes, did the values that today prevail--but that didn't yesterday--manage to do so? At this point a strange silence sets in among the theoreticians. But we still have not examined, curiously enough, two points in the current theory: the power structures and structural change. It isn't as if no one was talking about power but the talk is so vague that the source of the power seems to be the abstract system itself--abstract and in effect nonexistent, since we have here a conceptual tool, not a fact. The existence of social sectors with unequal power of decision concerning the means of production, and which therefore have greater or lesser power of decision concerning matters beyond economics too, is glossed over as we talk about the omnipresent "system." Each one of these sectors--social classes, in reality--works out on the basis of its own interests a complex of values and a view of the world and society all its own. Its power will be assured as the values of the dominant class quietly become the dominant values. At that moment, the power system is in the saddle, and the social system it imposes may be considered definitive. Why? Because it wants to be definitive, because the dominant class so wishes. It is idle after that to speculate on structural change, because it isn't wanted. A society that

considers itself the best of all possible societies will look on any change as a step down. For the social scientist, no commitment (activity that would transform the existing reality) is necessary; if any commitment is possible for this society, it is only "the false commitment to self--a commitment to a narcissistic approval of self as presently existing, in all its shining perfection--with the final result that one turns his eyes from the problems of the outer world to happily admire oneself in a mirror, occasionally flicking away the specks of dust that detract from his beauty" (Rousseau-Farganis, in Horowitz, 1969, t. II, p. 49).

In that way we learn that the "strictly scientific" theory has an underlying ideology: society's alienated distorted understanding merely covers over, rather than sees, those dimensions of its material basis on which the power of the dominant class is built. But any society has such an ideology--if it is alienated, if the possibilities for humanization in its forces of production are refused to the majority of people and handed over to a dominant class, to serve its particular interests--and if that class uses a value system of its own making to justify the whole process. The dilemma is not one that only the United States faces, however. In fact, it would be instructive if now, in the light of this dilemma, we reviewed the history of ideas we saw above. Thus we will reach the nub of our problem. We can expect that in every society where there is alienation we will find an ideology that serves as both its expression

and concealment. The various forms that social science takes from country to country will be the different (scientific) forms of this alienated understanding.

III. Latin America's independence was only superficial and partial. Separation from the Spanish crown did not bring true liberation, since it meant only a transfer of the area into the British Empire's sphere of influence. An interdependence was created--but the two subjects were unequal. Strictly, it was an economic colonialism. Our independence was severely hamstrung, despite the appearances; but the ruling creole elites were hamstrung too, in the service of the interests of the metropolis. As they sought to build up those societies, the elites showed an irresistible tendency to ape the models offered by the more progressive societies (the term "developed" had not yet come into vogue). Thus the social planners of that first period tried to reproduce on Latin-american soil the institutions of foreign lands, despite the drastically different characteristics of our societies and the ones imitated. It is undeniable that there was always a liberating social thought, for domestic questions as well as for our international relations and regional political unification. It was not the thought of the dominant class, however, and it had to remain subterranean till reappearing later in different form.

Despite its "social realism," its intention to organize specific

societies, this early thought suffered from a no less specific defect: unrealism. It was trying to superpose highly developed institutions (superstructures) on a still unorganized material base, on a potentially rich but uncleared, almost desert territory, with a history behind it far different from that of the societies used as paradigms. For this new world that capitalism built, it had been a history of depredation and dependence, under a distant power already in its decline.

The utilization of the possibilities we have mentioned required even in the context of that quasi-colonial dependence, a radical adaptation and modernization of Latinamerican society, from the ground up. The process was completed at about the middle of the 19th century, and sociology, under that imported form of social realism we call positivism, played an important role in it.

The new structures had barely been set up when the new idealistic era began: now the antipositivist currents arrived, scornful of the material facts behind social life, to legitimize the established order, or at least, conceal it under a flood of high-sounding words. It was an idle enough pastime for the dominant classes in calm possession of their dominions.

When British power fell apart and was replaced in these regions by that of the U. S. A., a profound change took place. It was more than a mere exchange of one distant master for another; a thorough readaptation of the whole social structure was needed to

make it serve new purposes. British rule had been colonial: it was based on the exchange of raw materials (from the periphery to the center) for manufactured goods (from the center to the periphery). Productive units on a national level can be relatively small; in fact, it is good that they be small because that preserves the metropolis' power of regional arbitration. But the Northamerican rule has reached its imperialist stage. "We should define imperialism as having the following five basis traits: 1) a concentration of production and capital brought to such a level of development that it produces monopolies, which play a decisive role in economic life; 2) a fusion of bank and industrial capital, and the creation of a financial oligarchy on the basis of this financial capital; 3) the exportation of capital, unlike that of goods, takes on a particularly great importance; 4) the formation of international monopolistic associations of capitalists, which divide up the world; and 5) the completion of the territorial dividing up of the world among the most important capitalist powers" (Lenin, 1960, p. 799).

This new form of dependence entails, as we have said, a profound readaptation, from regional integration into units able to produce on the new scale to a replacement of the old dominant class by a new one, which is no longer one of owners but rather of administrators of the foreign monopolists' property. The second modernization is underway: it is the era of development and of populist governments that, installed in power and protected by alien power,

seek to keep alive a drained out society-but not really to liberate it. The ideology used is the usual ideology of change, which would like to reach the very structures nothing is repeated more often than the phrase "change of structures" in the politico-economic jargon of today.

The "authentically scientific" social science has a very special task to fulfill in this context. There is nothing to notice in the traits of empiricity and theoreticity that characterize this social science, according to Johnson. But we should perhaps look closely at the other two. For example, we would expect this science to be accumulative. But accumulated on top of what hypotheses? What will be the tentative theories that we should then correct, refine and modify in the light of later discoveries? They are to be the very ones worked out for us in the center society. We are expected to believe that, even in the area of social sciences, the metropolis is "more advanced" than we are, along a line of progress each of whose stages every other country must pass through. That presumption would have us accept as the end of the process the very kind of society we criticized some pages earlier when speaking of the United States.

There is more. We are attempting now to integrate not individuals or groups, but entire societies, into a social system of international dimensions. The ideologues and nationalist political leaders of the periphery are used to treating the problems connected

with this integration in the same old way, i.e., as matters that pit the interests and values of the metropolis against those of its sphere of influence. The modernization process would like to act "rationally": and the social sciences can help here in various ways. They can, for instance, justify the social model desired by the dominant nation and the leading classes such a model would benefit. Or, they might devise ways to cope with problems of development, treated as merely economic issues, that are politically feasible. Or again, careful vigilance can spot centers of resistance and deviating tendencies that should be overcome. Thus social science becomes a gigantic apparatus for domination. But we have said that it should be a-moral: moral judgment comes from outside, from the ideology that holds that science together and guides it along. That is the ideology that critics of the Northamerican style social sciences are condemning today in Latin America. Those sciences came with great promise: that promise is what had disillusioned us, not their genuine scientific content.

IV. Now we come to the nub of the problem. Every scientific construction--and this is true of natural sciences as well--is a deductive conceptual system at whose lowest level there are still unproven hypotheses. By testing it against the facts, the value of any operative hypothesis is established--and the value of the entire system on which it depends. Herein lies the double aspect--

theoretical and empirical--of all social sciences.

But these theoretical systems are not built in an empty void of pure ideas. On the contrary, they are produced in the context of a specific meta-scientific vision of the world, whether it be one of mere common sense or, more rigorously, one of a philosophical nature. Questions of value, alien to the antiseptic regions of science, fit quite properly on this level.

There are, then, two ways to understand the a-morality of the scientific method. One is what we have just discussed: however much we strive to exclude references to value, they keep popping up out of the meta-scientific background of the theory--and those who, perhaps unwittingly, are using them can neither control them nor submit them to judgment. In his effort to preserve the neutrality of his science, the scientist is pursuing an impossible personal neutrality. Because his neutrality is after all just another (most shameful) sort of compromise: compromise with "established" values, no matter who may have established them. The scientist thus is forced to repudiate what is most intimate to him as man--the ability to be an actor in his own history. Turned into an object, stripped of his glory as subject in history, the social scientist is alienated--and everything he produces is alienating.

The second way of understanding neutrality rests on an important distinction. The rules of invention and double-checking in science are one thing; quite another is the morality of the scientists's

own conduct. Of all his conduct, even what he does as a scientist. It sounds almost contradictory to speak of a compromised science. for science is - indeed, has to be - neutral in the sense of not mixing up values with facts, what should be with what is. A compromised science is a caricature of science, just as art with a parti pris is a caricature of art. The crusading spirit can hardly add much to science. Rather, it opens the door to improvisation, to heated but imprecise thinking, to groundless conclusions.

But it is equally absurd to imagine a social scientist who isn't compromised, who is rigorously neutral. Whether he likes it or not, by commission or omission, his conduct implies one or another kind of commitment. In addition, that commitment leads him to adopt a particular view of the world, which he works out for himself or inherits from his class or society. His science will be impregnated with this view of the world (save for rare cases of intellectual schizophrenia) and will inevitably show traces of it. So the only way to preserve the methodological neutrality of science is to look quite openly at the meta-scientific postulates behind it. The only way to keep ideology from subordinating science's goals to its own is to make the scientist take stock within himself and examine his science. Neutrality in the scientific task thus implies a commitment in the one who practices science. A commitment in the strongest sense, as the conscious espousal of a properly human conduct, i. e., one that builds history. Science

then is seen to be a historical undertaking, not an occupation performed at a given moment in a history without actors, in a flow of time without any genuine history at all.

After reaching this point, we must now turn to certain requirements that this undertaking imposes on the social scientist in Latin America. Requirements that will ring out like a summons to the consciences of other men, who in other places similarly study social science.

V. Latin America is today looking for its second, and real, independence. It is searching for a double liberation: from external domination, of course, but also, domestically, a liberation of the dependent classes from their lords at home. Thus the process turns out to be both a social and a national revolution. This process appeals today for the dedication of the social scientist.

The fact that it is a national revolution introduces a first problem into the social scientist's task. The science he practices --no more and no less than other sciences--was not invented here: its methods, divisions, theories, some acquired results, everything came here prefabricated. He may therefore be tempted to pitch the whole thing overboard and to start from zero--if that were possible. Indeed, the temptation could be justified if one considers the inevitable ideological directions of the imported science.

Still, it is likely that the zero point is precisely a scientific

vacuum, which would then be filled by more of the old non-scientific jargon. The job to be done, then, is to carefully eliminate the implicit ideological baggage, both in general theory and in research techniques. If it can be done, it will provide a new meta-theoretical frame of reference, intellectually grounded in a fully conscious philosophy and the amplest possible knowledge of one's own history. This intellectual anchoring may not be enough, though; the commitment really begins when one takes a coherent position in the liberating struggle that society is today engaged in - which is no mere squabble of university dons. By that we mean that the action should prove the theory. But we will come back later to the implications of that statement.

Here let us introduce a digression. Can Marxism be the source of the meta-scientific hypotheses of social investigation in Latin America? Yes and no. For there is not only one Marxism. If we look at the extremes, for instance, we find one school that takes Marxism as a closed system, an ultimate, definitive explanation of everything, a consoling world view since it leaves no unsolved questions. That kind of Marxism seems to be just another ideology, in the most pejorative sense of the word, and therefore a further source of alienation and thereby unfitted for any scientific work. At the other extreme we meet a concept of history that is aware of its own relativity and intrinsically open to improvement, at the same time offering notions and techniques

of analysis that can help in the study of concrete societies. It is also a similarly open anthropology, to the extent that it allows for self-criticism and practices it not only on the level of discussion of ideas but in a liberating action too. In the case of this Marxism, the answer is yes. Let us see, anyway, to what extent there is Marxism present in Latin America's liberation movements and in its budding new social science.

Earlier, we stated that liberating activity is the touchstone for measuring the genuineness of scientific commitment. We should explain this more.

We are not saying that future sociologists should study guerrilla warfare and the use of machine guns, even if guerrilla warfare is decided on as the proper move. Scientific work itself should be a revolutionary task. It is so when it tears away the ideological veil that hides the oppressive external and internal structures that are smothering Latin America. One's first obligation, as a scientist and as a Latinamerican, is to discover one's society as it is and to come up with suggestions for liberating it.

In this work one has to be efficient, and to be so precisely as a scientist. An important part of one's task consists in improving methods, creating new ones if necessary, but also preserving what is valid in methods used elsewhere. As has been said of a different sort of weapons, it doesn't matter who manufactures them so much as who uses them and for what purpose.

If his scientific work really bears on the heart of the problem and if he carries it out professionally, the social scientist will probably run up against another, and a very serious consequence of his commitment. Anyone who denounces the established order and shows what is wrong with it can get killed. There may be few occasions when people's liberty and physical security are endangered, but it does happen. Besides, there are more subtle ways of putting pressure on unruly prophets, from an indirect cut in research grants to academic murder, or exclusion from the better paid jobs and those with more interesting possibilities for research. In any event, the revolutionary social scientist is exposed to the same risks all revolutionaries incur. His commitment requires him to accept them boldly. There is another hazard, too, for the social researcher. Since he has specialized knowledge, he receives prestige and access to power. He will always be liable to the temptation to use that power to advance his private ends, and many a social critic has wound up becoming a technocrat. We need a real asceticism here. An asceticism beginning with the language he uses: he should talk so that others, who like him are fighting for liberation, will understand. He can always use the specialized knowledge he has of society for his own benefit, but should he keep that knowledge to himself? The dilemmas here hinted at are enormous, but we have to face them if we are to overcome them.

Anyone who wants to use ordinary language will have to share to a large extent the total life of others who use it. And no human communication is possible when a great social gap separates people. The Latinamerican social scientist will have to learn, therefore, to resist the temptations of a comfortable academic position and live the life of those for whom he devotes his own.

So the task goes far beyond merely building a new science, to the birth of a new social scientist. Because what is really needed is to bring to life the new man.

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