

Objectivity of Social Science and Social Policy

Max Weber

Preface

Wherever assertions are explicitly made in the name of the editor or when tasks are set for the Archiv in the course of Section I of the foregoing essay, the personal views of the author are not involved. Each of the points in question has the express agreement of the coeditors. The author alone bears the responsibility for the form and content of Section II.

The fact that the points of view, not only of the contributors but of the editors as well, are not identical even on methodological issues, stands as a guarantee that the Archiv will not fall prey to any sectarian outlook. On the other hand, agreement as to certain fundamental issues is a presupposition of the joint assumption of editorial responsibility. This agreement refers particularly to the value of theoretical knowledge from "one-sided" points of view, the construction of precisely defined concepts and the insistence on the rigorous distinction between empirical knowledge and value-judgments as here understood. Naturally we do not claim to present anything new therewith.

The extensiveness of the discussion (Section II) and the frequent repetition of the same thought are intended only to maximize the general understanding of our argument in wider circles. For the sake of this intention, much--let us hope not too much--precision in expression has been sacrificed. For the same reason, we have omitted the presentation of a systematic analysis in favor of the present listing of a few methodological viewpoints. A systematic inquiry would have required the treatment of a large number of cognitive questions which are far deeper than those raised here. We are not interested here in the furtherance of logical analysis

per se. We are attempting only to apply the well-known results of modern logic to our own problems. Nor are we solving problems here; we are trying only to make their significance apparent to non-specialists. Those who know the work of the modern logicians--I cite only Windelband, Simmel, and for our purposes particularly Heinrich Rickert--will immediately notice that everything of importance in this essay is bound up with their work.

Introduction

WHEN A SOCIAL SCIENCE journal which also at times concerns itself with a social policy, appears for the first time or passes into the hands of a new editorial board, it is customary to ask about its "line." We, too, must seek to answer this question and following up the remarks in our "Preface," we will enter into the question in a more fundamental theoretical way. Even though or perhaps because, we are concerned with "self-evident truths," this occasion provides the opportunity to cast some light on the nature of the "social sciences" as we understand them, in such a manner that it can be useful, if not to the specialist, then to the reader who is more remote from actual scientific work.

In addition to the extension of our knowledge of the "social conditions of all countries," i.e., the facts of social life, the express purpose of the *Archiv* ever since its establishment has been the education of judgment about practical social problems--and in the very modest way in which such a goal can be furthered by private scholars--the criticism of practical social policy, extending even as far as legislation. In spite of this, the *Archiv* has firmly adhered, from the very beginning, to its intention to be an exclusively scientific journal and to proceed only with the methods of scientific research. Hence arises the question of whether the purpose stated above is compatible in principle with self-

confinement to the latter method. What has been the meaning of the value-judgments found in the pages of the *Archiv* regarding legislative and administrative measures, or practical recommendations for such measures? What are the standards governing these judgments? What is the validity of the value-judgments which are uttered by the critic, for instance, or on which a writer recommending a policy founds his arguments for that policy? In what sense, if the criterion of scientific knowledge is to be found in the "objective" validity of its results, has he remained within the sphere of *scientific* discussion? We will first present our own attitude on this question in order later to deal with the broader one: in what sense are there in general "objectively valid truths" in those disciplines concerned with social and cultural phenomena? This question, in view of the continuous changes and bitter conflict about the apparently most elementary problems of our discipline, its methods, the formulation and validity of its concepts, cannot be avoided. We do not attempt to offer solutions but rather to disclose problems--problems of the type to which our journal, if it is to meet its past and future responsibilities, must turn its attention.

Objectivity in Social Science

Section I

We all know that our science, as is the case with every science treating the institutions and events of human culture, (with the possible exception of political history) first arose in connection with *practical* considerations. Its most immediate and often sole purpose was the attainment of value-judgments concerning measures of State economic policy. It was a "technique" in the same sense as, for instance, the clinical disciplines in the medical sciences are. It has now become known how this situation was gradually modified. This modification was not, however, accompanied by a formulation of the logical distinction between "empirical knowledge," i.e., knowledge of what "is," and

"normative knowledge," i.e., knowledge of what "should be." The formulation of this distinction was hampered, first, by the view that immutably invariant natural laws,--later, by the view that an unambiguous evolutionary principle--governed economic life and that accordingly, *what was normatively right* was identical--in the former case--with the immutably *existent*-- and in the latter-- with the inevitably *emergent*. With the awakening of the historical sense, a combination of ethical evolutionism and historical relativism became the predominant attitude in our science. This attitude sought to deprive ethical norms of their formal character and through the incorporation of the totality of cultural values into the "ethical" sphere tried to give a *substantive content* to ethical norms. It was hoped thereby to raise economics to the status of an "ethical science" with empirical foundations. To the extent that an "ethical" label was given to all possible cultural ideals, the particular autonomy of the ethical imperative was obliterated, without however increasing the "objective" validity of those ideals. Nonetheless we can and must forego a discussion of the principles at issue. We merely point out that even today the confused opinion that economics does and should derive value-judgments from a specifically "economic point of view" has not disappeared but is especially current, quite understandably, among men of practical affairs.

Our journal as the representative of an empirical specialized discipline must, as we wish to show shortly, reject this view in principle. It must do so because, in our opinion, it can never be the task of an empirical science to provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived.

What is the implication of this proposition? It is certainly not that value-judgments are to be withdrawn from scientific discussion in general simply because in the last analysis they rest on certain ideals and are therefore "subjective" in origin. Practical action and

the aims of our journal would always reject such a proposition. Criticism is not to be suspended in the presence of value-judgments. The problem is rather: what is the meaning and purpose of the scientific criticism of ideals and value-judgments? This requires a somewhat more detailed analysis.

All serious reflection about the ultimate elements of meaningful human conduct is oriented primarily in terms of the categories "end" and "means." We desire something concretely either "for its own sake" or as a means of achieving something else which is more highly desired. The question of the appropriateness of the means for achieving a given end is undoubtedly accessible to scientific analysis. Inasmuch as we are able to determine (within the present limits of our knowledge) which means for the achievement of a proposed end are appropriate or inappropriate, we can in this way estimate the chances of attaining a certain end by certain available means. In this way we can indirectly criticize the setting of the end itself as practically meaningful (on the basis of the existing historical situation) or as meaningless with reference to existing conditions. Furthermore, when the possibility of attaining a proposed end appears to exist, we can determine (naturally within the limits of our empirical knowledge) the consequences which the application of the means to be used will produce in addition to the eventual attainment of the proposed end, as a result of the interdependence of all events. We can then provide the acting person with the ability to weigh and compare the undesirable as over against the desirable consequences of his action. Thus, we can answer the question: what will the attainment of a desired end "cost" in terms of the predictable loss of other values? Since, in the vast majority of cases, every goal that is striven for does "cost" or can "cost" something in this sense, the weighing of the goal in terms of the incidental consequences of the action which realizes it cannot be omitted from the deliberation of persons who act with a sense of responsibility. One of the most

important functions of the *technical criticism* which we have been discussing thus far is to make this sort of analysis possible.

To apply the results of this analysis in the making of a decision, however, is not a task which science can undertake; it is rather the task of the acting, willing person: he weighs and chooses from among the values involved according to his own conscience and his personal view of the world. Science can make him realize that all action and naturally, according to the circumstances, inaction imply in their consequences the espousal of certain values--and herewith--what is today so willingly overlooked--the rejection of certain others. The act of choice itself is his own responsibility.

We can also offer the person, who makes a choice, insight into the significance of the desired object. We can teach him to think in terms of the context and the meaning of the ends he desires, and among which he chooses. We do this through making explicit and developing in a logically consistent manner the "ideas" which actually do or which can underlie the concrete end. It is self-evident that one of the most important tasks of every science of cultural life is to arrive at a rational understanding of these "ideas" for which men either really or allegedly struggle. This does not overstep the boundaries of a science which strives for an "thought ordering of empirical reality," although the methods which are used in this interpretation of cultural values are not "inductions" in the usual sense. At any rate, this task falls at least partly beyond the limits of economics as defined according to the conventional division of labor. It belongs among the tasks of social philosophy. However, the historical influence of ideas in the development of social life has been and still is so great that our journal cannot renounce this task. It shall rather regard the investigation of this phenomenon as one of its most important obligations.

But the scientific treatment of value-judgments may not only understand and empathically analyze the desired ends and the

ideals which underlie them; it can also "judge" them critically. This criticism can of course have only a dialectical character, i.e., it can be no more than a formal logical judgment of historically given value-judgments and ideas, a testing of the ideals according to the postulate of the internal *consistency* of the desired end. It can, insofar as it sets itself this goal, aid the acting willing person in attaining self-clarification concerning the final axioms from which his desired ends are derived. It can assist him in becoming aware of the ultimate standards of value which he does not make explicit to himself or, which he must presuppose in order to be logical. The elevation of these ultimate standards, which are manifested in concrete value-judgments, to the level of explicitness is the utmost that the scientific treatment of value-judgments can do without entering into the realm of speculation. As to whether the person expressing these value-judgments *should* adhere to these ultimate standards is his personal affair; it involves will and conscience, not empirical knowledge.

An empirical science cannot tell anyone what he *should* do--but rather what he *can* do--and under certain circumstances--what he wishes to do. It is true that in our sciences, personal value-judgments have tended to influence scientific arguments without being explicitly admitted. They have brought about continual confusion and have caused various interpretations to be placed on scientific arguments even in the sphere of the determination of simple casual interconnections among facts according to whether the results increased or decreased the chances of realizing one's personal ideals, i.e., the possibility of desiring a certain thing. Even the editors and the collaborators of our journal will regard "nothing human as alien" to them in this respect. But it is a long way from this acknowledgment of human frailty to the belief in an "ethical" science of economics, which would derive ideals from its subject matter and produce concrete norms by applying general ethical imperatives. It is true that we regard as *objectively* valuable those innermost elements of the "personality," those highest and most

ultimate value-judgments which determine our conduct and give meaning and significance to our life. We can indeed espouse these values only when they appear to us as valid, as derived from our highest values and when they are developed in the struggle against the difficulties which life presents. Certainly, the dignity of the "personality" lies in the fact that for it there exist values about which it organizes its life;--even if these values are in certain cases concentrated exclusively within the sphere of the person's "individuality," then "self-realization" in *those* interests for which it claims *validity* as *values*, is the idea with respect to which its whole existence is oriented. Only on the assumption of belief in the validity of values is the attempt to espouse value-judgments meaningful.

However, to *judge* the *validity* of such values is a matter of *faith*. It may perhaps be a task for the speculative interpretation of life and the universe in quest of their meaning. But it certainly does not fall within the province of an empirical science in the sense in which it is to be practised here. The empirically demonstrable fact that these ultimate ends undergo historical changes and are debatable does not affect this distinction between empirical science and value-judgments, contrary to what is often thought. For even the knowledge of the most certain proposition of our theoretical sciences--e.g., the exact natural sciences or mathematics, is, like the cultivation and refinement of the conscience, a product of culture.

However, when we call to mind the practical problems of economic and social policy (in the usual sense), we see that there are many, indeed countless, practical questions in the discussion of which there seems to be general agreement about the self-evident character of certain goals. Among these we may mention emergency credit, the concrete problems of social hygiene, poor relief, factory inspection, industrial courts, employment exchanges, large sections of protective labor legislation--in short, all those

issues in which, at least in appearance, only the *means* for the attainment of the goal are at issue. But even if we were to mistake the illusion of self-evidence for truth --which science can never do without damaging itself--and wished to view the conflicts immediately arising from attempts at practical realization as purely technical questions of expediency--which would very often be incorrect--even in this case we would have to recognize that this illusion of the self-evidence of normative standards of value is dissipated as soon as we pass from the concrete problems of philanthropic and protective social and economic services to problems of economic and social policy. The distinctive characteristic of a problem of social *policy* is indeed the fact that it cannot be resolved merely on the basis of purely technical considerations which assume already settled ends. Normative standards of value can and must be the objects of *dispute* in a discussion of a problem of social policy because the problem lies in the domain of general *cultural* values. And the conflict occurs not merely, as we are too easily inclined to believe today, between "class interests" but between general views on life and the universe as well. This latter point, however, does not lessen the truth that the particular ultimate value-judgment which the individual espouses is decided among other factors and certainly to a quite significant degree by the degree of affinity between it and his class interests--accepting for the time being this only superficially unambiguous term. One thing is certain under all circumstances, namely, the more "general" the problem involved, i.e., in this case, the broader its cultural *significance*, the less subject it is to a single unambiguous answer on the basis of the data of empirical sciences and the greater the role played by value-ideas and the ultimate and highest personal axioms of belief. It is simply naive to believe, although there are many specialists who even now occasionally do, that it is possible to establish and to demonstrate as scientifically valid "a principle" for practical social science from which the norms for the solution of practical problems can be unambiguously derived. However much the social sciences need the discussion of

practical problems in terms of fundamental principles, i.e., the reduction of unreflective value-judgments to the premises from which they are logically derived and however much our journal intends to devote itself specially to them--certainly the creation of a lowest common denominator for our problems in the form of generally valid ultimate value-judgments cannot be its task or in general the task of any empirical science. Such a thing would not only be impracticable; it would be entirely meaningless as well. Whatever the interpretation of the basis and the nature of the validity of the ethical imperatives, it is certain that from them, as from the norms for the concretely conditioned conduct of the *individual, cultural values* cannot be unambiguously derived as being normatively desirable; it can do so the less, the more inclusive are the values concerned. Only positive religions--or more precisely expressed: dogmatically bound *sects*-- are able to confer on the content of *cultural values* the status of unconditionally valid *ethical* imperatives. Outside these sects, cultural ideals which the individual wishes to realize and ethical obligations which he *should* fulfil do not, in principle, share the same status. The fate of an epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must know that we cannot learn the *meaning* of the world from the results of its analysis, be it ever so perfect; it must rather be in a position to create this meaning itself. It must recognize that general views of life and the universe can never be the products of increasing empirical knowledge, and that the highest ideals, which move us most forcefully, are always formed only in the struggle with other ideals which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us.

Only an optimistic syncretism, such as is, at times, the product of evolutionary-historical relativism, can theoretically delude itself about the profound seriousness of this situation or practically shirk its consequences. It can, to be sure, be just as obligatory subjectively for the practical politician, in the individual case, to mediate between antagonistic points of view as to take sides with

one of them. But this has nothing whatsoever to do with scientific "objectivity." *Scientifically the "middle course" is not truer even by a hair's breadth*, than the most extreme party ideals of the right or left. Nowhere are the interests of science more poorly served in the long run than in those situations where one refuses to see uncomfortable facts and the realities of life in all their starkness. The *Archiv* will struggle relentlessly against the severe self-deception which asserts that through the synthesis of several party points of view, or by following a line between them, practical norms of *scientific validity* can be arrived at. It is necessary to do this because, since this piece of self-deception tries to mask its own standards of value in relativistic terms, it is more dangerous to the freedom of research than the former naive faith of parties in the scientific "demonstrability" of their dogmas. The capacity to distinguish between empirical knowledge and value-judgments, and the fulfillment of the scientific duty to see the factual truth as well as the practical duty to stand up for our own ideals constitute the program to which we wish to adhere with ever increasing firmness.

There is and always will be--and this is the reason that it concerns us--an unbridgeable distinction among (1) those arguments which appeal to our capacity to become enthusiastic about and our feeling for concrete practical aims or cultural forms and values, (2) those arguments in which, once it is a question of the validity of ethical norms, the appeal is directed to our conscience, and finally (3) those arguments which appeal to our capacity and need for *thought ordering* of empirical reality in a manner which lays claim to *validity* as empirical truth. This proposition remains correct, despite, as we shall see, the fact that those highest "values" underlying the practical interest are and always will be decisively significant in determining the focus of attention of thinking activity in the sphere of the cultural sciences. It has been and remains true that a systematically correct scientific proof in the social sciences, if it is to achieve its purpose, must be acknowledged as correct

even by a Chinese--or--more precisely stated--it must constantly *strive* to attain this goal, which perhaps may not be completely attainable due to faulty data. Furthermore, the successful *logical* analysis of the content of an ideal and its ultimate axioms and the discovery of the consequences which arise from pursuing it, logically and practically, must also be valid for the Chinese. At the same time, our Chinese can lack a "sense" for our ethical imperative and he can and certainly often will deny the ideal itself and the concrete value-judgments derived from it. Neither of these two latter attitudes can affect the scientific value of the analysis in any way. Quite certainly our journal will not ignore the ever and inevitably recurrent attempts to give an unambiguous interpretation to culture. On the contrary, these attempts themselves rank with the most important products of this cultural life and, under certain circumstances, among its dynamic forces. We will therefore constantly strive to follow with care the course of these discussions of "social philosophy" (as here understood). We are furthermore completely free of the prejudice which asserts that reflections on culture which go beyond the analysis of empirical data in order to interpret the world metaphysically can, because of their metaphysical character fulfil no useful tasks of understanding. Just what these tasks are is primarily a cognitive question, the answer to which we must and can, in view of our purpose, disregard at this point. There is one tenet to which we adhere most firmly in our work, namely, that a social science journal, in our sense, to the extent that it is *scientific* should be a place where those truths are sought, which--to remain with our illustration--can claim, even for a Chinese, the validity appropriate to an analysis of empirical reality.

Of course, the editors cannot once and for all deny to themselves or their contributors the possibility of expressing in value-judgments the ideals which motivate them. However two important duties arise in connection with this. First, to keep the readers and themselves sharply aware at every moment of the standards by

which they judge reality and from which the value-judgment is derived, instead of, as happens too often, deceiving themselves in the conflict of ideals by a value melange of values of the most different orders and types, and seeking to offer something to everybody. If this obligation is rigorously heeded, the practical value attitude can be not only harmless to scientific interests but even directly useful, and indeed mandatory. In the scientific criticism of legislative and other practical recommendations, the motives of the legislator and the ideals of the critic in all their scope often can not be clarified and analyzed in a tangible and intelligible form in any other way than through the confrontation of the standards of value underlying the ideas criticized with others, preferably the critic's own. Every meaningful *value-judgment* about someone else's *aspirations* must be a criticism from the standpoint of one's own *worldview*; it must be a struggle against *another's* ideals from the standpoint of one's *own*. If in a particular concrete case, the ultimate value-axioms which underlie practical activity are not only to be designated and scientifically analyzed but are also to be shown in their relationship to *other* value-axioms, "positive" criticism by means of a systematic exposition of the latter is unavoidable.

In the pages of this journal, especially in the discussion of legislation, there will inevitably be found social *policy*, i.e., the statement of ideals, in addition to social *science*, i.e., the analysis of facts. But we do not by any means intend to present such discussions as "science" and we will guard as best we can against allowing these two to be confused with each other. In such discussions, *science* no longer has the floor. For that reason, the second fundamental imperative of scientific freedom is that in such cases it should be constantly made clear to the readers (and--again we say it--above all to one's self!) exactly at which point the scientific investigator becomes silent and the evaluating and acting person begins to speak. In other words, it should be made explicit just where the arguments are addressed to the understanding and

where to the sentiments. The constant confusion of the scientific discussion of facts and their evaluation is still one of the most widespread and also one of the most damaging traits of work in our field. The foregoing arguments are directed against this confusion, and not against the clear-cut introduction of one's own ideals into the discussion. An *attitude of moral indifference* has no connection with *scientific* "objectivity." The *Archiv*, at least in its intentions, has never been and should never be a place where polemics against certain currents in politics or social policy are carried on, nor should it be a place where struggles are waged for or against ideals in politics or social-policy. There are other journals for these purposes. The peculiar characteristic of the journal has rather been from the very beginning and, insofar as it is in the power of the editors, shall continue to be that political antagonists can meet in it to carry on scientific work. It has not been a "socialist" organ hitherto and in the future it shall not be a "citizen." It excludes no one from its circle of contributors who is willing to place himself within the framework of scientific discussion. It cannot be an arena for "objections," replies and rebuttals, but in its pages no one will be protected, neither its contributors nor its editors, from being subjected to the sharpest factual, scientific criticism. Whoever cannot bear this or who takes the viewpoint that he does not wish to work, in the service of scientific knowledge, with persons whose other ideals are different from his own, is free not to participate.

However, we should not deceive ourselves about it--this last sentence means much more in practice than it seems to do at first glance. In the first place, there are psychological limits everywhere and especially in Germany to the possibility of coming together freely with one's political opponents in a neutral forum, be it social or intellectual. This obstacle which should be relentlessly combatted as a sign of narrow-minded party fanaticism and backward political culture, is reinforced for a journal like ours through the fact that in social sciences the stimulus to the posing of scientific problems is in actuality always given by *practical*

"questions." Hence the very recognition of the existence of a scientific problem coincides, personally, with the possession of specifically oriented motives and values. A journal which has come into existence under the influence of a general interest in a concrete problem, will always include among its contributors persons who are personally interested in these problems because certain concrete situations seem to be incompatible with, or seem to threaten, the realization of certain ideal values in which they believe. A bond of similar ideals will hold this circle of contributors together and it will be the basis of a further recruitment. This in turn will tend to give the journal, at least in its treatment of questions of practical social *policy*, a certain "*character*" which of course inevitably accompanies every collaboration of vigorously sensitive persons whose value standpoint regarding the problems cannot be entirely expressed even in purely theoretical analysis; in the criticism of *practical* recommendations and measures it quite legitimately finds expression--under the particular conditions above discussed. The *Archiv* first appeared at a time in which certain practical aspects of the "labor problem" (as traditionally understood) stood in the forefront of social science discussions. Those persons for whom the problems which the *Archiv* wished to treat were bound up with ultimate and decisive value-judgments and who on that account became its most regular contributors also espoused at the same time the view of culture which was strongly influenced by these value-judgments. We all know that though this journal, through its explicit self-restriction to "scientific" discussions and through the express invitation to the "adherents of all political standpoints," denied that it would pursue a certain "tendency," it nonetheless possessed a "character" in the above sense. This "character" was created by the group of its regular contributors. In general they were men who, whatever may have been other divergences in their points of view, set as their goal the protection of the physical well-being of the laboring masses and the increase of the latter's share of the material and intellectual values of our culture. As a means,

they employed the combination of state intervention into the arena of material interests with the freer shaping of the existing political and legal order. Whatever may have been their opinion as to the form of the social order in the more remote future--for the present, they accepted the emergent trends of the capitalist system, not because they seemed better than the older forms of social organization but because they seemed to be practically inevitable and because the attempt to wage a fundamental struggle against it appeared to hinder and not aid the cultural rise of the working class. In the situation which exists in Germany today--we need not be more specific at this point--this was not and is not to be avoided. Indeed, it bore direct fruit in the successful many-sidedness of the participation in the scientific discussion and it constituted a source of strength for the journal; under the given circumstances it was perhaps even one of its claims to the justification for its existence.

There can be no doubt that the development of a "character," in this sense, in a scientific journal can constitute a threat to the freedom of scientific analysis; it really does amount to that when the selection of contributors is purposely one-sided. In this case the cultivation of a "character" in a journal is practically equivalent to the existence of a "tendency." The editors are aware of the responsibility which this situation imposes upon them. They propose neither the deliberate transformation of the character of the *Archiv* nor its artificial preservation by means of a careful restriction of the contributors to scholars of certain definite party loyalties. They accept it as given and await its further "development." The form which it takes in the future and the modifications which it may undergo as a result of the inevitable broadening of its circle of contributors will depend primarily on the character of those persons who, seeking to serve the cause of science, enter the circle and become or remain frequent contributors. It will be further affected by the broadening of the *problems*, the advancement of which is a goal of the journal.

With these remarks we come to the question on which we have not yet touched, namely, the factual delimitation of our field of operations. No answer can, however, be given without raising the question as to the goal of social scientific knowledge in general. When we distinguished in principle between "value-judgments" and "empirical knowledge," we presupposed the existence of an unconditionally valid type of knowledge in the social sciences, i.e., the thought ordering of empirical social reality. This presupposition now becomes our problem in the sense that we must discuss the meaning of objectively "valid" truth in the social sciences. The genuineness of the problem is apparent to anyone who is aware of the conflict about methods, "fundamental concepts" and presuppositions, the incessant shift of "viewpoints," and the continuous redefinition of "concepts" and who sees that the theoretical and historical modes of analysis are still separated by an apparently unbridgeable gap. It constitutes, as a despairing Viennese examinee once sorrowfully complained, "two sciences of economics." What is the meaning of "objectivity" in this context? The following discussion will be devoted to this question.

Section II

This journal has from the beginning treated social-economic data as its subject-matter. Although there is little point in entering here into the definition of terms and the delineation of the proper boundaries of the various sciences, we must nonetheless state briefly what we mean by this.

Most roughly expressed, the basic element in all those phenomena which we call, in the widest sense, "social-economic" is constituted by the fact that our physical existence and the satisfaction of our most ideal needs are everywhere confronted with the quantitative limits and the qualitative inadequacy of the necessary external means, so that their satisfaction requires planful

provision and work, struggle with nature and the association of human beings. The quality of an event as a "social-economic" event is not something which it possesses "objectively." It is rather conditioned by the orientation of our interest of understanding, as it arises from the specific cultural significance which we attribute to the particular event in a given case. Wherever those aspects of a cultural event which constitute its specific significance for us are connected with a social-economic event either directly or most indirectly, they involve, or at least to the extent that this connection exists, can involve a problem for the social sciences. By a social science problem, we mean a task for a discipline the object of which is to throw light on the ramifications of that fundamental social-economic phenomenon: the scarcity of means.

Within the total range of social-economic problems, we are now able to distinguish events and constellations of norms, institutions, etc., the economic aspect of which constitutes their primary cultural significance for us. Such are, for example, the phenomena of the stock exchange and the banking world, which, in the main, interest us only in *this* respect. This will be the case regularly (but not exclusively) when institutions are involved which were *deliberately* created or used for economic ends. Such objects of our knowledge we may call "economic" events (or institutions, as the case may be). There are other phenomena, for instance, religious ones, which do not interest us, or at least do not primarily interest us with respect to their economic significance but which, however, under certain circumstances do acquire significance in this regard because they have consequences which are of interest from the economic point of view. These we shall call "economically relevant" phenomena. Finally there are phenomena which are *not* "economic" in our sense and the economic effects of which are of no, or at best slight, interest to us (e.g., the developments of the artistic taste of a period) but which in individual instances are in their turn more or less strongly influenced in certain important aspects by economic factors such as, for instance, the social

stratification of the artistically interested public. We shall call these "economically *conditioned* phenomena." The constellation of human relationships, norms, and normatively determined conduct which we call the "state" is for example in its fiscal aspects, an "economic" phenomenon; insofar as it influences economic life through legislation or otherwise (and even where other than economic considerations deliberately guide its behavior), it is "economically relevant." To the extent that its behavior in "non-economic" affairs is partly influenced by economic motives, it is "economically conditioned." After what has been said, it is self-evident that: firstly, the boundary lines of "economic" phenomena are vague and not easily defined; secondly, the "economic" aspect of a phenomenon is by no means *only* "economically conditioned" or *only* "economically relevant"; thirdly, a phenomenon is "economic" only insofar as and *only* as long as our *interest is* exclusively focused on its constitutive significance in the material struggle for existence.

Like the science of social-economics since Marx and Roscher, our journal is concerned not only with economic phenomena but also with those which are "economically relevant" and "economically conditioned." The domain of such subjects extends naturally--and varyingly in accordance with the focus of our interest at the moment --through the totality of cultural life. Specifically economic motives--i.e., motives which, in their aspect most significant to us, are rooted in the above-mentioned fundamental fact--operate wherever the satisfaction of even the most immaterial need or desire is bound up with the application of *scarce* material means. Their force has everywhere on that account conditioned and transformed not only the mode in which cultural wants or preferences are satisfied, but their content as well, even in their most subjective aspects. The indirect influence of social relations, institutions and groups governed by "material interests" extends (often unconsciously) into all spheres of culture without exception, even into the finest nuances of aesthetic and religious feeling. The

events of everyday life no less than the "historical" events of the higher reaches of political life, collective and mass phenomena as well as the "individuated" conduct of statesmen and individual literary and artistic achievements are influenced by it. They are "economically conditioned." On the other hand, all the activities and situations constituting an historically given culture affect the formation of the material wants, the mode of their satisfaction, the integration of interest-groups and the types of power which they exercise. They thereby affect the course of "economic development" and are accordingly "economically relevant." To the extent that our science interprets particular causes--be they economic or non-economic--to *economic* cultural phenomena, it seeks "historical" knowledge. Insofar as it traces a specific element of cultural life (the economic element in its cultural significance) through the most diverse cultural contexts, it is making an historical interpretation from a specific point of view, and offering a partial picture, a *preliminary* contribution to a more complete historical knowledge of culture.

Social economic *problems* do not exist everywhere that an economic event plays a role as cause or effect--since problems arise only where the significance of those factors is *problematical* and can be precisely determined only through the application of the methods of social-economics. But despite this, the range of social-economics is almost overwhelming.

After due consideration our journal has generally excluded hitherto the treatment of a whole series of highly important special fields in our discipline, such as descriptive economics, economic history in the narrower sense, and statistics. It has likewise left to other journals, the discussion of technical fiscal questions and the technical- economic problems of prices and markets in the modern exchange economy. Its sphere of operations has been the present significance and the historical development of certain conflicts and constellations of interests which have arisen through the dominant

role of investment-seeking capital in modern societies. It has not thereby restricted itself to those practical and historical problems which are designated by the term "the social question" in its narrower sense, i.e., the place of the modern working class in the present social order. Of course, the scientific elaboration of the interest in this special question which became widespread in Germany in the 1880s, has had to be one of its main tasks. The more the practical treatment of labor conditions became a permanent object of legislation and public discussion in Germany, the more the accent of scientific work had to be shifted to the analysis of the more universal dimensions of the problem. It had thereby to culminate in the analysis of all the cultural problems which have arisen from the peculiar nature of the economic bases of our culture and which are, in that sense, specifically modern. The journal soon began to deal historically, statistically and theoretically with the most diverse, partly "economically relevant," and partly "economically conditioned" conditions of the other great social classes of modern states and their interrelations. We are only drawing the conclusions of this policy when we state that the scientific investigation of the *general cultural significance of the social-economic structure of the human community* and its historical forms of organization is the central aim of our journal. This is what we mean when we call our journal the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft*. The title is intended to indicate the historical and theoretical treatment of the same problems, the practical solution of which constitutes "social *policy*" in the widest sense of this word. We thereby utilize the right to apply the word "social" in the meaning which concrete present-day problems give to it. If one wishes to call those disciplines which treat the events of human life with respect to their cultural significance "cultural science," then social science in our sense belongs in that category. We shall soon see what are the logical implications of this.

Undoubtedly the selection of the *social-economic* aspect of cultural life signifies a very definite delimitation of our theme. It will be

said that the economic, or as it has been inaccurately called, the "materialistic" point of view, from which culture is here being considered, is "one-sided." This is true and the one-sidedness is intentional. The belief that it is the task of scientific work to cure the "one-sidedness" of the economic approach by broadening it into a *general* social science suffers primarily from the weakness that the "social" criterion (i.e., the relationships among persons) acquires the specificity necessary for the delimitation of scientific problems only when it is accompanied by some substantive predicate. Otherwise, as the subject matter of a science, it would naturally comprehend philology, for example, as well as church history and particularly all those disciplines which concern themselves with the state which is the most important form of the normative regulation of cultural life. The fact that social-economics concerns itself with "social" relations is no more justification for regarding it as the necessary precursor of a "general social science" than its concern with vital phenomena makes it a part of biology, or its preoccupation with events on one of the planets makes it a part of an extended and improved astronomy of the future. It is not the "actual" interconnections of "things" but the *conceptual* interconnections of *problems* which define the scope of the various sciences. A new "science" emerges where new problems are pursued by new methods and truths are thereby discovered which open up significant new points of view.

It is now no accident that the term: "social" which seems to have a quite general meaning, turns out to have, as soon as one carefully examines its application, a particular specifically colored though often indefinite meaning. Its "generality" rests on nothing but its ambiguity. It provides, when taken in its "general" meaning, no specific *point of view*, from which the *significance* of given elements of culture can be analyzed.

Liberated as we are from the antiquated notion that all cultural phenomena can be *deduced* as a product or function of the

constellation of "material" interests, we believe nevertheless that the analysis of social and cultural phenomena with special reference to their economic conditioning and ramifications was a scientific principle of creative fruitfulness and with careful application and freedom from dogmatic restrictions, will remain such for a very long time to come. The so called "materialistic conception of history" as a *worldview* or as a formula for the casual explanation of historical reality is to be rejected most emphatically. The advancement of the economic *interpretation* of history is one of the most important aims of our journal. This requires further explanation.

The so-called "materialistic conception of history" with the crude elements of genius of the early form which appeared, for instance, in the *Communist Manifesto* still prevails only in the minds of laymen and dilettantes. In these circles one still finds the peculiar condition that their need for a casual explanation of an historical event is never satisfied until somewhere or somehow economic causes are shown (or seem) to be operative. Where this however is the case, they content themselves with the most threadbare hypotheses and the most general phrases since they have then satisfied their dogmatic need to believe that the economic "factor" is the "real"- one, the only "true" one, and the one which "in the last instance is everywhere decisive." This phenomenon is by no means unique. Almost all the sciences, from philology to biology have occasionally claimed to be the sources not only of specialized scientific knowledge but of "*worldview*" as well. Under the impression of the profound cultural significance of *modern* economic transformations and especially of the far-reaching ramifications of the "labor question," the inevitable monistic tendency of every type of thought which is not self-critical naturally follows this path.

The same tendency is now appearing in anthropology where the political and commercial struggles of nations for world dominance

are being fought with increasing acuteness. There is a widespread belief that "in the last analysis" all historical events are results of the interplay of innate "racial qualities." In place of uncritical descriptions of "national characters," there emerges the even more uncritical concoction of "social theories" based on the "natural sciences." We shall carefully follow the development of anthropological research in our journal insofar as it is significant from our point of view. It is to be hoped that the situation in which the casual explanation of cultural events by the invocation of "racial characteristics" testifies to our ignorance--just as the reference to the "milieu" or, earlier, to the "conditions of the age"--will be gradually overcome by research which is the fruit of systematic training. If there is anything that has hindered this type of research, it is the fact that eager dilettantes have thought that they could contribute something different and better to our knowledge of culture than the broadening of the possibility of the sure interpretation of individual concrete cultural events occurring in historical reality to *concrete, historically* given causes through the study of precise empirical data which have been selected from specific points of view. Only to the extent that they are able to do this, are their results of interest to us and only then does "racial biology" become something more than a product of the modern passion for founding new sciences.

The problem of the significance of the economic interpretation of history is the same. If, following a period of boundless overestimation, the danger now exists that its scientific value will be underestimated, this is the result of the unexampled naivete with which the economic interpretation of reality was applied as a "universal" canon which explained all cultural phenomena--i.e., all those which are meaningful to us--as, in the last analysis, economically conditioned. Its present logical form is not entirely unambiguous. Wherever the strictly economic explanation encounters difficulties, various devices are available for maintaining its general validity as the decisive casual factor.

Sometimes every historical event which *is not* explicable by the invocation of economic motives is regarded *for that very reason* as a scientifically insignificant "accident." At others, the definition of "economic" is stretched beyond recognition so that all human interests which are related in any way whatsoever to the use of material means are included in the definition. If it is historically undeniable that different responses occur in two situations which are economically identical--due to political, religious, climatic and countless other non-economic determinants--then in order to maintain the primacy of the economic all these factors are reduced to historically accidental "conditions" upon which the economic factor operates as a "cause." It is obvious however that all those factors which are "accidental" according to the economic interpretation of history follow their own laws in the same sense as the economic factor. From a point of view which traces the specific meaning of these non-economic factors, the existing *economic* "conditions" are "historically accidental" in quite the same sense. A favorite attempt to preserve the supreme significance of the economic factor despite this consists in the interpretation of the constant interaction of the individual elements of cultural life as a casual or functional dependence of one on the other, or rather of all the others on one, namely, the economic element. When a certain non-economic institution has functioned for the benefit of certain economic class interests, as, for example, where certain religious institutions allowed themselves to be and actually were used as "black police," the whole institution is conceived either as having been created for this function or--quite metaphysically--as being impelled by a "developmental tendency" emanating from the economic factor.

It is unnecessary nowadays to go into detail to prove to the specialist that this interpretation of the purpose of the economic analysis of culture is in part the expression of a certain historical constellation which turned its scientific interest towards certain economically conditioned cultural problems, and in part the

zealous devotion to a specialized department of science. It is clear that today it is antiquated at best. The explanation of everything by economic causes *alone is* never exhaustive in any sense whatsoever in *any* sphere of cultural phenomena, not even in the "economic" sphere itself. In principle, a banking history of a nation which adduces only economic motives for explanatory purposes is naturally just as unacceptable as an explanation of the Sistine Madonna as a consequence of the social-economic basis of the culture of the epoch in which it was created. It is no way more complete than, for instance, the explanation of capitalism by reference to certain shifts in the content of the religious ideas which played a role in the genesis of the capitalistic attitude; nor is it more exhaustive than the explanation of a political structure from its geographical background. In *all* of these cases, the degree of significance which we are to attribute to economic factors is decided by the class of causes to which we are to interpret those specific elements of the phenomenon in question to which we attach significance in given cases and in which we are interested. The justification of the *one-sided* analysis of cultural reality from specific "points of view"--in our case with respect to its economic conditioning--emerges purely as a technical expedient from the fact that training in the observation of the effects of qualitatively similar categories of causes and the repeated utilization of the same scheme of concepts and hypotheses offers all the advantages of the division of labor. It is free from the charge of arbitrariness to the extent that it is successful in producing insights into interconnections which have been shown to be valuable for the casual explanation of concrete historical events. However--the "*one-sidedness*" and the unreality of the purely economic interpretation of history is in general only a special case of a principle which is generally valid for the scientific knowledge of cultural reality. The main task of the discussion to follow is to make explicit the logical foundations and the general methodological implications of this principle. There is no absolutely "objective" scientific analysis of culture-- or put perhaps

more narrowly but certainly not essentially differently for our purposes--of "social phenomena" independent of special and "one-sided" viewpoints according to which--expressly or tacitly, consciously or unconsciously--they are selected, analyzed and organized for expository purposes. The reasons for this lie in the goal of understanding of all research in social science which seeks to transcend the purely *formal* treatment of the legal or conventional norms regulating social life.

The type of social science in which we are interested is an *empirical science* of concrete *reality*. Our aim is the understanding of the characteristic uniqueness of the reality in which we move. We wish to understand on the one hand the relationships and the cultural significance of individual events in their contemporary manifestations and on the other the causes of their being historically *so* and not *otherwise*. Now, as soon as we attempt to reflect about the way in which life confronts us in immediate concrete situations, it presents an infinite multiplicity of successively and coexistently emerging and disappearing events, both "within" and "outside" ourselves. The absolute infinitude of this multiplicity is seen to remain undiminished even when our attention is focused on a single "object," for instance, a concrete act of exchange, as soon as we seriously attempt an exhaustive description of *all* the individual components of this "individual phenomena," to say nothing of explaining it casually. All the analysis of infinite reality which the finite human mind can conduct rests on the tacit assumption that only a finite portion of this reality constitutes the object of scientific investigation, and that only it is "important" in the sense of being "worthy of being known." But what are the criteria by which this segment is selected? It has often been thought that the decisive criterion in the cultural sciences, too, was in the last analysis, the "regular" recurrence of certain casual relationships. The "laws" which we are able to perceive in the infinitely manifold stream of events must--according to this conception--contain the scientifically "essential"

aspect of reality. As soon as we have shown some causal relationship to be a "law," i.e., if we have shown it to be universally valid by means of comprehensive historical induction or have made it immediately and tangibly plausible according to our subjective experience, a great number of similar cases order themselves under the formula thus attained. Those elements in each individual event which are left unaccounted for by the selection of their elements subsumable under the "law" are considered as scientifically unintegrated residues which will be taken care of in the further perfection of the system of "laws." Alternatively they will be viewed as "accidental" and therefore scientifically unimportant *because* they do not fit into the structure of the "law"; in other words, they are not typical of the event and hence can only be the objects of "idle curiosity." Accordingly, even among the followers of the Historical School we continually find the attitude which declares that the ideal which all the sciences, including the cultural sciences, serve and towards which they should strive even in the remote future is a system of propositions from which reality can be "deduced." As is well known, a leading natural scientist believed that he could designate the (factually unattainable) ideal goal of such a treatment of cultural reality as a sort of "*astronomical*" knowledge.

Let us not, for our part, spare ourselves the trouble of examining these matters more closely--however often they have already been discussed. The first thing that impresses one is that the "astronomical" knowledge which was referred to is not a system of laws at all. On the contrary, the laws which it presupposes have been taken from other disciplines like mechanics. But it too concerns itself with the question of the *individual* consequence which the working of these laws in an unique *configuration* produces, since it is these individual configurations which are *significant* for us. Every individual constellation which it "explains" or predicts is causally explicable only as the consequence of another equally individual constellation which has

preceded it. As far back as we may go into the grey mist of the far-off past, the reality to which the laws apply always remains equally *individual*, equally *undeducible* from laws. A cosmic "primeval state" which had no individual character or less individual character than the cosmic reality of the present would naturally be a meaningless notion. But is there not some trace of similar ideas in our field in those propositions sometimes derived from natural law and sometimes verified by the observation of "primitives," concerning an economic-social "primeval state" free from historical "accidents," and characterized by phenomena such as "primitive agrarian communism," sexual 'promiscuity,' etc., from which individual historical development emerges by a sort of fall from grace into concreteness?

The social-scientific interest has its point of departure, of course, in the *real*, i.e., concrete, individually-structured configuration of our cultural life in its universal relationships which are themselves no less individually-structured, and in its development out of other social cultural conditions, which themselves are obviously likewise individually structured. It is clear here that the situation which we illustrated by reference to astronomy as a limiting case (which is regularly drawn on by logicians for the same purpose) appears in a more accentuated form. Whereas in astronomy, the heavenly bodies are of interest to us only in their *quantitative* and exact aspects, the *qualitative* aspect of phenomena concerns us in the social sciences. To this should be added that in the social sciences we are concerned with psychological and intellectual phenomena the empathic understanding of which is naturally a problem of a specifically different type from those which the schemes of the exact natural sciences in general can or seek to solve. Despite that, this distinction in itself is not a distinction in principle, as it seems at first glance. Aside from pure mechanics, even the exact natural sciences do not proceed without qualitative categories. Furthermore, in our own field we encounter the idea (which is obviously distorted) that at least the phenomena characteristic of a

money-economy--which are basic to our culture--are quantifiable and on that account subject to formulation as "laws." Finally it depends on the breadth or narrowness of one's definition of "law" as to whether one will also include regularities which because they are not quantifiable are not subject to numerical analysis. Especially insofar as the influence of psychological and intellectual factors is concerned, it does not in any case exclude the establishment of *rules* governing rational conduct. Above all, the point of view still persists which claims that the task of psychology is to play a role comparable to mathematics for the *cultural science* in the sense that it analyzes the complicated phenomena of social life into their psychic conditions and effects, reduces them to their most elementary possible psychic factors and then analyzes their functional inter-dependences. Thereby, a sort of "chemistry" if not "mechanics" of the psychic foundations of social life would be created. Whether such investigations can produce valuable and--what is something else--useful results for the cultural sciences, we cannot decide here. But this would be irrelevant to the question as to whether the aim of social-economic knowledge in our sense, i.e., knowledge of *reality* with respect to its cultural *significance* and its casual relationships can be attained through the quest for recurrent sequences. Let us assume that we have succeeded by means of psychology or otherwise in analyzing all the observed and imaginable relationships of social phenomena into some ultimate elementary "factors," that we have made an exhaustive analysis and classification of them and then formulated rigorously exact laws covering their behavior.--What would be the significance of these results for our knowledge of the *historically* given culture or any individual phase thereof, such as capitalism, in its development and cultural significance? As an thinking tool, it would be as useful as a textbook of organic chemical combinations would be for our knowledge of the biogenetic aspect of the animal and plant world. In each case, certainly an important and useful preliminary step would have been taken. In neither case can concrete reality be deduced from "laws" and "factors." This is not

because some higher mysterious powers reside in living phenomena (such as "dominants," "entelechies," or whatever they might be called). This, however, a problem in its own right. The real reason is that the analysis of reality is concerned with the *configuration* into which those (hypothetical !) "factors" are arranged to form a cultural phenomenon which is historically significant to us. Furthermore, if we wish to "explain" this individual configuration "causally" we must invoke other equally individual configurations on the basis of which we will explain it with the aid of those (hypothetical!) "laws."

The determination of those (hypothetical) "laws" and "factors" would in any case only be the first of the many operations which would lead us to the desired type of knowledge. The analysis of the historically given individual configuration of those "factors" and their *significant* concrete interaction, conditioned by their historical context and especially the *rendering intelligible* of the basis and type of this significance would be the next task to be achieved. This task must be achieved, it is true, by the utilization of the preliminary analysis but it is nonetheless an entirely new and *distinct* task. The tracing as far into the past as possible of the individual features of these historically evolved configurations which are *contemporaneously* significant, and their historical explanation by antecedent and equally individual configurations would be the third task. Finally the prediction of possible future constellations would be a conceivable fourth task. For all these purposes, clear concepts and the knowledge of those (hypothetical) "laws" are obviously of great value as heuristic means--but only as such. Indeed they are quite indispensable for this purpose. But even in this function their limitations become evident at a decisive point. In stating this, we arrive at the decisive feature of the method of the cultural sciences.

Study of Cultural Value

We have designated as "cultural sciences" those disciplines which analyze the phenomena of life in terms of their cultural significance. The *significance* of a configuration of cultural phenomena and the basis of this significance cannot however be derived and rendered intelligible by a system of analytical laws, however perfect it may be, since the significance of cultural events presupposes a *value-orientation* towards these events. The concept of culture is a *value-concept*. Empirical reality becomes "culture" to us because and insofar as we relate it to value ideas. It includes those segments and only those segments of reality which have become significant to us because of this value-relationship. Only a small portion of existing concrete reality is colored by our value-conditioned interest and it alone is significant to us. It is significant because it reveals relationships which are important to us due to their connection with our values. Only because and to the extent that this is the case is it worthwhile for us to know it in its individual features. We cannot cover, however, what is meaningful to us by means of a "presupposition-free" investigation of empirical data. Rather perception of its meaningfulness to us is the presupposition of its becoming an *object of* investigation. Meaningfulness naturally does not coincide with laws as such, and the more general the law the less the coincidence. For the specific meaning which a phenomenon has for us is naturally *not* to be found in those relationships which it shares with many other phenomena.

The focus of attention on reality under the guidance of values which lend it significance and the selection and ordering of the phenomena which are thus affected in the light of their cultural significance is entirely different from the analysis of reality in terms of laws and general concepts. Neither of these two types of the analysis of reality has any necessary logical relationship with the other. They can coincide in individual instances but it would be most disastrous if their occasional coincidence caused us to think that they were not distinct *in principle*. The *cultural significance* of

a phenomenon, e.g., the significance of exchange in a money economy, can be the fact that it exists on a mass scale as a fundamental component of modern culture. But the historical fact that it plays this role must be causally explained in order to render its cultural significance understandable. The analysis of the *general* aspects of exchange and the technique of the market is a -- highly important and indispensable-- *preliminary task*. For not only does this type of analysis leave unanswered the question as to how exchange historically acquired its fundamental significance in the modern world; but above all else, the fact with which we are primarily concerned, namely, the *cultural significance* of the money-economy, for the sake of which we are interested in the description of exchange technique and for the sake of which alone a science exists which deals with that technique --is not derivable from any "law." The *general features* of exchange, purchase, etc., interest the jurist-- but we are concerned with the analysis of the *cultural significance* of the concrete *historical* fact that today exchange exists on a mass scale. When we require an explanation, when we wish to understand what distinguishes the social-economic aspects of our culture for instance from that of antiquity in which exchange showed precisely the same general traits as it does today and when we raise the question as to where the significance of "money economy" lies, logical principles of quite heterogeneous derivation enter into the investigation. We will apply those concepts with which we are provided by the investigation of the general features of economic mass phenomena--indeed, insofar as they are relevant to the meaningful aspects of our culture, we shall use them as *means* of exposition. The *goal* of our investigation is not reached through the exposition of those laws and concepts, precise as it may be.

The question as to what should be the object of universal conceptualization cannot be decided "without presupposition" but only with reference to the *significance* which certain segments of that infinite multiplicity which we call "commerce" have for

culture. We seek knowledge of an historical phenomenon, meaning by historical: significant in its individuality . And the decisive element in this is that only through the presupposition that a finite part alone of the infinite variety of phenomena is significant, does the knowledge of an individual phenomenon become logically meaningful. Even with the widest imaginable knowledge of "laws," we are helpless in the face of the question: how is the *causal explanation* of an *individual* fact possible--since a *description* of even the smallest slice of reality can never be exhaustive? The number and type of causes which have influenced any given event are always infinite and there is nothing in the things themselves to set some of them apart as alone meriting attention. A chaos of "empirical judgments" about countless individual events would be the only result of a serious attempt to analyze reality "without presuppositions." And even this result is only seemingly possible, since every single perception discloses on closer examination an infinite number of constituent perceptions which can never be exhaustively expressed in a judgment.

Order is brought into this chaos only on the condition that in every case only a *part* of concrete reality is interesting and *significant* to us, because only it is related to the *cultural values* with which we approach reality. Only certain sides of the infinitely complex concrete phenomenon, namely those to which we attribute a general *cultural significance*-- are therefore worthwhile knowing. They alone are objects of causal explanation. And even this causal explanation evinces the same character; an *exhaustive* causal investigation of any concrete phenomena in its full reality is not only practically impossible--it is simply nonsense. We select only those causes to which are to be interpreted in the individual case, the "essential" feature of an event. Where the *individuality* of a phenomenon is concerned, the question of causality is not a question of *laws* but of concrete causal *relationships*; it is not a question of the subsumption of the event under some general rubric as a representative case but of its interpretation as a consequence

of some constellation. It is in brief a *question of interpretation*. Wherever the causal explanation of a "cultural phenomenon--an "historical individual" is under consideration, the knowledge of causal *laws* is not the *end* of the investigation but only a *means*. It facilitates and renders possible the causal interpretation to their concrete causes of those components of a phenomenon the individuality of which is culturally significant. So far and only so far as it achieves this, is it valuable for our knowledge of concrete relationships. And the more "general," i.e., the more abstract the laws, the less they can contribute to the causal interpretation of *individual* phenomena and, more indirectly, to the understanding of the significance of cultural events.

What is the consequence of all this?

Naturally, it does not imply that the knowledge of *universal* propositions, the construction of abstract concepts, the knowledge of regularities and the attempt to formulate "*laws*" have no scientific justification in the cultural sciences. Quite the contrary, if the causal knowledge of the historians consists of the interpretation of concrete effects to concrete causes, a *valid* interpretation of any individual effect without the application of "*typological*" *knowledge*-- i.e., the knowledge of recurrent causal sequences-- would in general be impossible. Whether a single individual component of a relationship is, in a concrete case, to be assigned causal responsibility for an effect, the causal explanation of which is at issue, can in doubtful cases be determined only by estimating the effects which we *generally* expect from it and from the other components of the same complex which are relevant to the explanation. In other words, the "*adequate*" effects of the causal elements involved must be considered in arriving at any such conclusion. The extent to which the historian (in the widest sense of the word) can perform this interpretation in a reasonably certain manner with his imagination sharpened by personal experience and trained in analytic methods and the extent to which he must have

recourse to the aid of special disciplines which make it possible, varies with the individual case. Everywhere, however, and hence also in the sphere of complicated economic processes, the more certain and the more comprehensive our general knowledge the greater is the *validity* of interpretation. This proposition is not in the least affected by the fact that even in the case of all so-called "economic laws" without exception, we are concerned here not with "laws" in the narrower exact natural science sense, but with *adequate* causal relationships expressed in rules and with the application of the category of "objective possibility." The establishment of such regularities is not the *end* but rather the *means* of knowledge. It is entirely a question of expediency, to be settled separately for each individual case, whether a regularly recurrent causal relationship of everyday experience should be formulated into a "law." Laws are important and valuable in the exact natural sciences, in the measure that those sciences are *universally valid*. For the knowledge of historical phenomena in their concreteness, the most general laws, because they are most devoid of content are also the least valuable. The more comprehensive the validity,--or scope--of a term, the more it leads us away from the richness of reality since in order to include the common elements of the largest possible number of phenomena, it must necessarily be as abstract as possible and hence *devoid* of content. In the cultural sciences, the knowledge of the universal or general is never valuable in itself.

The conclusion which follows from the above is that an "objective" analysis of cultural events, which proceeds according to the thesis that the ideal of science is the reduction of empirical reality of "laws," is meaningless. It is not meaningless, as is often maintained, because cultural or psychic events for instance are "objectively" less governed by laws. It is meaningless for a number of other reasons. Firstly, because the knowledge of social laws is not knowledge of social reality but is rather one of the various aids used by our minds for attaining this end; secondly, because

knowledge of *cultural* events is inconceivable except on a basis of the *significance* which the concrete constellations of reality have for us in certain *individual* concrete situations. In *which* sense and in *which* situations this is the case is not revealed to us by any law; it is decided according to the *value-ideas* in the light of which we view "culture" in each individual case. "Culture" is a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process, a segment on which *human beings* confer meaning and significance. This is true even for the human being who views a *particular* culture as a mortal enemy and who seeks to "return to nature." He can attain this point of view only after viewing the culture in which he lives from the standpoint of his values, and finding it "too soft." This is the purely logical-formal fact which is involved when we speak of the logically necessary rootedness of all historical individuals in "value-ideas." The transcendental presupposition of every *cultural science* lies not in our finding a certain culture or any "culture" in general to be *valuable* but rather in the fact that we are *cultural beings*, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it *significance*. Whatever this significance may be, it will lead us to judge certain phenomena of human existence in its light and to respond to them as being (positively or negatively) meaningful. Whatever may be the content of this attitude--these phenomena have cultural significance for us and on this significance alone rests its scientific interest. Thus when we speak here of the conditioning of cultural knowledge through *value* ideas (following the terminology of modern logic, it is done in the hope that we will not be subject to crude misunderstandings such as the opinion that cultural significance should be attributed only to *valuable* phenomena. Prostitution is a *cultural* phenomenon just as much as religion or money. All three are cultural phenomena *only* because and *only* insofar as their existence and the form which they historically assume touch directly or indirectly on our cultural *interests* and arouse our striving for knowledge concerning problems brought

into focus by the value-ideas which give *significance* to the fragment of reality analyzed by those concepts.

All knowledge of cultural reality, as may be seen, is always knowledge from *particular points of view*. When we require from the historian and social research worker as an elementary presupposition that they distinguish the important from the trivial and that he should have the necessary "point of view" for this distinction, we mean that they must understand how to relate the events of the real world consciously or unconsciously to universal "cultural values" and to select out those relationships which are significant for us. If the notion that those standpoints can be derived from the "facts themselves" continually recurs, it is due to the naive self-deception of the specialist who is unaware that it is due to the value-ideas with which he unconsciously approaches his subject matter, that he has selected from an absolute infinity a tiny portion with the study of which he *concerns* himself. In connection with this selection of individual special "aspects" of the event which always and everywhere occurs, consciously or unconsciously, there also occurs that element of cultural-scientific work which is referred to by the often-heard assertion that the "personal" element of a scientific work is what is really valuable in it, and that personality must be expressed in every work if its existence is to be justified. To be sure, without the investigator's value-ideas, there would be no principle of selection of subject-matter and no meaningful knowledge of the concrete reality. Just as without the investigator's conviction regarding the significance of particular cultural facts, every attempt to analyze concrete reality is absolutely meaningless, so the direction of his personal belief, the refraction of values in the prism of his mind, gives direction to his work. And the values to which the scientific genius relates the object of his inquiry may determine, i.e., decide the "conception" of a whole epoch, not only concerning what is regarded as "valuable" but also concerning what is significant or insignificant, "important" or "unimportant" in the phenomena.

Accordingly, cultural science in our sense involves "subjective" presuppositions insofar as it concerns itself only with those components of reality which have some relationship, however indirect, to events to which we attach cultural *significance*. Nonetheless, it is entirely *causal* knowledge exactly in the same sense as the knowledge of significant concrete natural events which have a qualitative character. Among the many confusions which the overreaching tendency of a formal-juristic outlook has brought about in the cultural sciences, there has recently appeared the attempt to "refute" the "materialistic conception of history" by a series of clever but fallacious arguments which state that since all economic life must take place in legally or conventionally *regulated forms*, all economic "development" must take the form of striving for the creation of new *legal* forms. Hence, it is said to be intelligible only through ethical maxims and is on this account essentially different from every type of "natural" development. Accordingly the knowledge of economic development is said to be "purposeful" in character. Without wishing to discuss the meaning of the ambiguous term "development," or the logically no less ambiguous term "purpose" in the social sciences, it should be stated that such knowledge need not be "purposeful" in the sense assumed by this point of view. The cultural significance of normatively regulated legal *relations* and even norms themselves can undergo fundamental revolutionary changes even under conditions of the formal identity of the prevailing legal norms. Indeed, if one wishes to lose one's self for a moment in phantasies about the future, one might theoretically imagine, let us say, the "socialization of the means of production" unaccompanied by any conscious "striving" towards this result, and without even the disappearance or addition of a single paragraph of our legal code; the statistical frequency of certain legally regulated relationships might be changed fundamentally, and in many cases, even disappear entirely; a great number of legal norms might become *practically* meaningless and their whole cultural significance

changed beyond identification. *De lege ferenda* discussions may be justifiably disregarded by the "materialistic conception of history" since its central proposition is the indeed inevitable change in the *significance* of legal institutions. Those who view the painstaking labor of causally understanding historical reality as of secondary importance can disregard it, but it is impossible to supplant it by any type of "purpose." From our viewpoint, "purpose" is the conception of an *effect* which becomes a *cause* of an action. Since we take into account every cause which produces or can produce a significant effect, we also consider this one. Its specific significance consists only in the fact that we not only *observe* human conduct but can and desire to understand it.

Undoubtedly, all value-ideas are "subjective." Between the "historical" interest in a family chronicle and that in the development of the greatest conceivable cultural phenomena which were and are common to a nation or to mankind over long epochs, there exists an infinite gradation of "significance" arranged into an order which differs for each of us. And they are, naturally, historically variable in accordance with the character of the culture and the ideas which rule men's minds. But it obviously does not follow from this that research in the cultural sciences can only have results which are "subjective" in the sense that they are *valid* for one person and not for others. Only the degree to which they interest different persons varies. In other words, the choice of the object of investigation and the extent or depth to which this investigation attempts to penetrate into the infinite causal web, are determined by the value-ideas which dominate the investigator and his age. In the *method* of investigation, the guiding "point of view" is of great importance for the *construction* of the conceptual scheme which will be used in the investigation. In the mode of their *use*, however, the investigator is obviously bound by the norms of our thought just as much here as elsewhere. For scientific truth is precisely what is *valid* for all who *seek* the truth.

However, there emerges from this the meaninglessness of the idea which prevails occasionally even among historians, namely, that the goal of the cultural sciences, however far it may be from realization, is to construct a closed system of concepts, in which reality is synthesized in some sort of *permanently* and *universally* valid classification and from which it can again be deduced. The stream of immeasurable events flows unendingly towards eternity. The cultural problems which move men form themselves ever anew and in different colors, and the boundaries of that area in the infinite stream of concrete events which acquires meaning and significance for us, i.e., which becomes an "historical individual," are constantly subject to change. The intellectual contexts from which it is viewed and scientifically analyzed shift. The points of departure of the cultural sciences remain changeable throughout the limitless future as long as a Chinese ossification of intellectual life does not render mankind incapable of setting new questions to the eternally inexhaustible flow of life. A systematic science of culture, even only in the sense of a definitive, objectively valid, systematic fixation of the problems which it should treat, would be senseless in itself. Such an attempt could only produce a collection of numerous, specifically particularized, heterogeneous and disparate viewpoints in the light of which reality becomes "culture" through being significant in its unique character.

Method of Social Science

Having now completed this lengthy discussion, we can finally turn to the question which is *methodologically* relevant in the consideration of the "objectivity" of cultural knowledge. The question is: what is the logical function and structure of the *concepts* which our science, like all others, uses? Restated with special reference to the decisive problem, the question is: what is the significance of *theory* and theoretical conceptualization for our knowledge of cultural reality?

Economics was originally--as we have already seen--a "technique," at least in the central focus of its attention. By this we mean that it viewed reality from an at least ostensibly unambiguous and stable practical value standpoint: namely, the increase of the "wealth" of the population. It was on the other hand, from the very beginning, more than a "technique" since it was integrated into the great scheme of the natural law and rationalistic *worldview* of the eighteenth century. The nature of that *worldview* with its optimistic faith in the theoretical and practical rationalization of reality had an important consequence insofar as it *obstructed* the discovery of the *problematic* character of that standpoint which had been assumed as self-evident. As the rational analysis of society arose in close connection with the modern development of natural science, so it remained related to it in its whole method of approach. In the natural sciences, the practical value attitude toward what was immediately and technically useful was closely associated from the very first with the hope, taken over as a heritage of antiquity and further elaborated, of attaining a purely "objective" (i.e., independent of all individual contingencies) monistic knowledge of the totality of reality in a *conceptual* system of metaphysical *validity* and mathematical *form*. It was thought that this hope could be realized by the method of generalizing abstraction and the formulation of laws based on empirical analysis. The natural sciences which were bound to value standpoints, such as clinical medicine and even more what is conventionally called "technology" became purely practical "arts." The values for which they strove, e.g., the health of the patient, the technical perfection of a concrete productive process, etc., were fixed for the time being for all of them. The methods which they used could only consist in the application of the laws formulated by the theoretical disciplines. Every theoretical advance in the construction of these laws was or could also be an advance for the practical disciplines. With the end given, the progressive reduction of concrete practical questions (e.g., a case of illness, a technical problem, etc.) to special cases of generally valid laws, meant that extension of

theoretical knowledge was closely associated and identical with the extension of technical-practical possibilities.

When modern biology subsumed those aspects of reality which interest us *historically*, i.e., in all their concreteness, under a universally valid evolutionary principle, which at least had the appearance --but not the actuality--of embracing everything essential about the subject in a scheme of universally valid laws, this seemed to be the final twilight of all value standpoints in all the sciences. For since the so-called historical event was a segment of the totality of reality, since the principle of causality which was the presupposition of all scientific work, seemed to require the analysis of all events into generally valid "laws," and in view of the overwhelming success of the natural sciences which took this idea seriously, it appeared as if there was in general no conceivable meaning of scientific work other than the discovery of the *laws* of events. Only those aspects of phenomena which were involved in the "laws" could be essential from the scientific point of view, and concrete "individual" events could be considered only as "types," i.e., as representative illustrations of laws. An interest in such events in themselves did not seem to be a "scientific" interest.

It is impossible to trace here the important repercussions of this will-to-believe of naturalistic monism in economics. When socialist criticism and the work of the historians were beginning to transform the original value standpoints, the vigorous development of zoological research on one hand and the influence of Hegelian panlogism on the other prevented economics from attaining a clear and full understanding of the relationship between concept and reality. The result, to the extent that we are interested in it, is that despite the powerful resistance to the infiltration of naturalistic dogma due to German idealism since Fichte and the achievement of the German Historical School in law and economics and partly because of the very work of the Historical School, the naturalistic viewpoint in certain decisive problems has not yet been overcome.

Among these problems we find the relationship between "theory" and "history," which is still problematic in our discipline.

The "abstract-theoretical" method even today shows unmediated and ostensibly irreconcilable cleavage from empirical-historical research. The proponents of this method recognize in a thoroughly correct way the methodological impossibility of supplanting the historical knowledge of reality by the formulation of laws or, vice versa, of constructing "laws" in the rigorous sense through the mere juxtaposition of historical observations. Now in order to arrive at these laws--for they are certain that science should be directed towards these as its highest goal--they take it to be a fact that we always have a direct awareness of the structure of human actions in all their reality. Hence--so they think--science can make human behavior directly intelligible with axiomatic evidentness and accordingly reveal its laws. The only exact form of knowledge--the formulation of immediately and intuitively *evident* laws--is however at the same time the only one which offers access to events which have not been directly observed. Hence, at least as regards the fundamental phenomena of economic life, the construction of a system of abstract and therefore purely formal propositions analogous to those of the exact natural sciences, is the only means of analyzing and intellectually mastering the complexity of social life. In spite of the fundamental methodological distinction between historical knowledge and the knowledge of "laws" which the creator of the theory drew as the *first* and *only* one, he now claims empirical *validity*, in the sense of the *deducibility* of reality from "laws," for the propositions of abstract theory. It is true that this is not meant in the sense of empirical validity of the abstract economic laws as such, but in the sense that when equally "exact" theories have been constructed for all the other relevant factors, all these abstract theories together must contain the true reality of the object--i.e., whatever is worthwhile knowing about it.

Exact economic theory deals with the operation of *one* psychic motive, the other theories have as their task the formulation of the behavior of all the other motives into similar sorts of propositions enjoying hypothetical validity. Accordingly, the fantastic claim has occasionally been made for economic theories--e.g., the abstract theories of price, interest, rent, etc.,--that they can, by ostensibly following the analogy of physical science propositions, be validly applied to the derivation of quantitatively stated conclusions from given real premises, since given the ends, economic behavior with respect to means is unambiguously "determined." This claim fails to observe that in order to be able to reach this result even in the simplest case, the totality of the existing historical reality including every one of its causal relationships must be assumed as "given" and presupposed as known. But if *this* type of knowledge were accessible to the finite mind of man, abstract theory would have no value of understanding whatsoever. The naturalistic prejudice that every concept in the cultural sciences should be similar to those in the exact natural sciences has led in consequence to the misunderstanding of the meaning of this theoretical construction . It has been believed that it is a matter of the psychological isolation of a specific "impulse," the acquisitive impulse, or of the isolated study of a specific maxim of human conduct, the so-called economic principle. Abstract theory purported to be based on psychological *axioms* and as a result historians have called for an *empirical* psychology in order to show the invalidity of those axioms and to derive the course of economic events from psychological principles.

We do not wish at this point to enter into a detailed criticism of the belief in the significance of a--still to be created--systematic science of "social psychology" as the future foundation of the cultural sciences, and particularly of social economics. Indeed, the partly brilliant attempts which have been made hitherto to interpret economic phenomena psychologically, show in any case that the procedure does not begin with the analysis of psychological

qualities, moving then to the analysis of social institutions, but that, on the contrary, insight into the psychological preconditions and consequences of institutions presupposes a precise knowledge of the latter and the scientific analysis of their structure. In concrete cases, psychological analysis can contribute then an extremely valuable deepening of the knowledge of the historical cultural *conditioning* and cultural *significance* of institutions. The interesting aspect of the psychic attitude of a person in a social situation is specifically particularized in each case, according to the special cultural significance of the situation in question. It is a question of an extremely heterogeneous and highly concrete structure of psychic motives and influences. Social-psychological research involves the study of various very disparate *individual* types of cultural elements with reference to their interpretability by our empathic understanding. Through social-psychological research, with the knowledge of individual institutions as a point of departure, we will learn increasingly how to understand institutions in a psychological way. We will not however deduce the institutions from psychological laws or explain them by elementary psychological phenomena.

Thus, the far-flung polemic, which centered on the question of the psychological justification of abstract theoretical propositions, on the scope of the "acquisitive impulse" and the "economic principle," etc., turns out to have been fruitless.

In the establishment of the propositions of abstract theory, it is only apparently a matter of "deductions" from fundamental psychological motives. Actually, the former are a special case of a kind of concept-construction which is peculiar and to a certain extent, indispensable, to the cultural sciences. It is worthwhile at this point to describe it in further detail since we can thereby approach more closely the fundamental question of the significance of theory in the social sciences. Therewith we leave undiscussed, once and for all, whether *the* particular analytical

concepts which we cite or to which we allude as illustrations, correspond to the purposes they are to serve, i.e., whether in fact they are well-adapted. The question as to how far, for example, contemporary "abstract theory" should be further elaborated, is ultimately also a question of the strategy of science, which must, however concern itself with other problems as well. Even the "theory of marginal utility" is subsumable under a "law of marginal utility."

The Ideal Type

We have in abstract economic theory an illustration of those synthetic constructs which have been designated as "*ideas*" of historical phenomena. It offers us an ideal picture of events on the commodity-market under conditions of a society organized on the principles of an exchange economy, free competition and rigorously rational conduct. This conceptual development brings together certain relationships and events of historical life into a complex, which is conceived as an internally consistent system. Substantively, this construct in itself is like a *utopia* which has been arrived at by the thinking accentuation of certain elements of reality. Its relationship to the empirical data consists solely in the fact that where market-conditioned relationships of the type referred to by the abstract construct are discovered or suspected to exist in reality to some extent, we can make the *characteristic* features of this relationship pragmatically *clear* and *understandable* by reference to an *ideal-type*. This procedure can be indispensable for heuristic as well as expository purposes. The ideal typical concept will help to develop our skill in interpretation in *research*: it is no "hypothesis" but it offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses. It is not a *description* of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description. It is thus the "idea" of the *historically* given modern society, based on an exchange economy, which is developed for us by quite the same logical principles as are used in constructing the

idea of the medieval "city economy" as a "categorical" concept. When we do this, we construct the concept "city economy" not as an average of the economic structures actually existing in all the cities observed but as an *ideal-type*. An ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *thought* construct. In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*.

Historical research faces the task of determining in each individual case, the extent to which this ideal-construct approximates to or diverges from reality, to what extent for example, the economic structure of a certain city is to be classified as a "city-economy." When carefully applied, those concepts are particularly useful in research and exposition. In very much the same way one can work the "idea" of "handicraft" into a utopia by arranging certain traits, actually found in an unclear, confused state in the industrial enterprises of the most diverse epochs and countries, into a consistent ideal-construct by an accentuation of their essential tendencies. This ideal-type is then related to the idea which one finds expressed there. One can further delineate a society in which all branches of economic and even intellectual activity are governed by maxims which appear to be applications of the same principle which characterizes the ideal-typical "handicraft" system. Furthermore, one can juxtapose alongside the ideal typical "handicraft" system the antithesis of a correspondingly ideal-typical capitalistic productive system, which has been abstracted out of certain features of modern large scale industry. On the basis of this, one can delineate the utopia of a "capitalistic" culture, i.e., one in which the governing principle is the investment of private capital. This procedure would accentuate certain individual concretely diverse traits of modern material and intellectual culture

in its unique aspects into an ideal construct which from our point of view would be completely self-consistent. This would then be the delineation of an "*idea*" of *capitalistic culture*. We must disregard for the moment whether and how this procedure could be carried out. It is possible, or rather, it must be accepted as certain that numerous, indeed a very great many, utopias of this sort can be worked out, of which *none* is like another, and *none* of which can be observed in empirical reality as an actually existing economic system, but *each* of which however claims that it is a representation of the "idea" of capitalistic culture. *Each* of these can claim to be a representation of the "idea" of capitalistic culture to the extent that it has really taken certain traits, meaningful in their essential features, from the empirical reality of our culture and brought them together into a unified ideal-construct. For those phenomena which interest us as cultural phenomena are interesting to us with respect to very different kinds of value-ideas to which we relate them. Inasmuch as the "points of view" from which they can become significant for us are very diverse, the most varied criteria can be applied to the selection of the traits which are to enter into the construction of an ideal-typical view of a particular culture.

What is the significance of such ideal-typical constructs for an *empirical* science, as we wish to constitute it? Before going any further, we should emphasize that the idea of an ethical *imperative*, of a "model" of what "ought" to exist is to be carefully distinguished from the thought construct, which is "ideal" in the strictly logical sense of the term. It is a matter here of constructing relationships which our imagination accepts as plausibly motivated and hence as "objectively possible" and which appear as *adequate* from the typological standpoint.

Whoever accepts the proposition that the knowledge of historical reality can or should be a "presupposition-free" copy of "objective" facts, will deny the value of the ideal-type. Even those who

recognize that there is no "presupposition-free" in the logical sense and that even the simplest excerpt from a statute or from a documentary source can have scientific meaning only with reference to "significance" and ultimately to value-ideas, will more or less regard the construction of any such historical "utopias" as an expository device which endangers the autonomy of historical research and which is, in any case, a vain sport. And, in fact, *whether* we are dealing simply with a conceptual game or with a scientifically fruitful method of conceptualization and theory-construction can never be decided *a priori*. Here, too, there is only one criterion, namely, that of success in revealing concrete cultural phenomena in their interdependence, their causal conditions and their *significance*. The construction of abstract ideal-types recommends itself not as an end but as a *means*.

Every conscientious examination of the conceptual elements of historical exposition shows however that the historian as soon as he attempts to go beyond the bare establishment of concrete relationships and to determine the *cultural* significance of even the simplest individual event in order to "characterize" it, *must* use concepts which are precisely and unambiguously definable only in the form of ideal types. Or are concepts such as "individualism," "imperialism," "feudalism," "mercantilism," "conventional," etc., and innumerable concepts of like character by means of which we seek thoughtfully and empathically to understand reality constructed substantively by the "presupposition-free" *description* of some concrete phenomenon or through the abstract synthesis of those traits which are *common* to numerous concrete phenomena? Hundreds of words in the historian's vocabulary are ambiguous constructs created to meet the unconsciously felt need for adequate expression and the meaning of which is only concretely felt but not clearly thought out. In a great many cases, particularly in the field of descriptive political history, their ambiguity has not been prejudicial to the clarity of the presentation. It is sufficient that in each case the reader should *feel* what the historian had in mind; or,

one can content one's self with the idea that the author used a *particular* meaning of the concept with special reference to the concrete case at hand. The greater the need however for a sharp appreciation of the significance of a cultural phenomenon, the more imperative is the need to operate with unambiguous concepts which are not only particularly but also systematically defined. A "definition" of such synthetic historical terms according to the scheme of genetical proximity and specific difference naturally nonsense. But let us consider it. Such a form of the establishment of the meanings of words is to be found only in axiomatic disciplines which use syllogisms. A simple "descriptive analysis" of these concepts into their components either does not exist or else exists only illusorily, for the question arises, as to *Which* of these components should be regarded as essential. When a categorical definition of the content of the concept is sought, there remains only the ideal-type in the sense explained above. It is a conceptual construct which is neither historical reality nor even the "true" reality. It is even less fitted to serve as a schema under which a real situation or action is to be subsumed as one *instance*. It has the significance of a purely ideal *limiting* concept with which the real situation or action is *compared* and surveyed for the explication of certain of its significant components. Such concepts are constructs in terms of which we formulate relationships by the application of the category of objective possibility. By means of this category, the adequacy of our imagination, oriented and disciplined by reality, is *judged*.

In this function especially, the ideal-type is an attempt to analyze historically unique configurations or their individual components by means of categorical concepts. Let us take for instance the concepts "church" and "sect." They may be broken down purely classificatorily into complexes of characteristics whereby not only the distinction between them but also the content of the concept must constantly remain fluid. If however I wish to formulate the concept of "sect" categorically, e.g., with reference to certain

important cultural significance which the "sectarian spirit" has had for modern culture, certain characteristics of both become *essential* because they stand in an adequate causal relationship to those influences. However, the concepts thereupon become ideal-typical in the sense that they appear in full conceptual *integrity* either not at all or only in individual instances. Here as elsewhere every concept which is not purely classificatory diverges from reality. But the discursive nature of our knowledge, i.e., the fact that we comprehend reality only through a chain of intellectual modifications postulates such a conceptual shorthand. Our imagination can often dispense with explicit conceptual formulations as a means of *investigation*. But as regards exposition, to the extent that it wishes to be unambiguous, the use of precise formulations in the sphere of cultural analysis is in many cases absolutely necessary. Whoever disregards it entirely must confine himself to the formal aspect of cultural phenomena, e.g., to legal history. The universe of legal norms is naturally clearly definable and is valid (in the *legal* sense!) for historical reality. But social science in our sense is concerned with practical *significance*. This significance however can very often be brought unambiguously to mind only by relating the empirical data to an ideal limiting case. If the historian (in the widest sense of the word) rejects an attempt to construct such ideal types as a "theoretical construction," i.e., as useless or dispensable for his concrete heuristic purposes, the inevitable consequence is either that he consciously or unconsciously uses other similar concepts without formulating them verbally and elaborating them logically or that he remains stuck in the realm of the vaguely "felt."

Nothing, however, is more dangerous than the *confusion* of theory and history stemming from naturalistic prejudices. This confusion expresses itself firstly in the belief that the "true" content and the essence of historical reality is portrayed in such theoretical constructs or secondly, in the use of these constructs as a procrustean bed into which history is to be forced or thirdly, in the

hypostatization of such "ideas" as real "forces" and as a "true" reality which operates behind the passage of events and which works itself out in history.

This latter danger is especially great since we are also, indeed primarily, accustomed to understand by the "ideas" of an epoch the thoughts or ideals which dominated the mass or at least an historically decisive number of the persons living in that epoch itself, and who were therefore significant as components of its culture. Now there are two aspects to this: in the first place, there are certain relationships between the "idea" in the sense of a tendency of practical or theoretical thought and the "idea" in the sense of the ideal-typical portrayal of an epoch constructed as a heuristic device. An ideal type of certain situations, which can be abstracted from certain characteristic social phenomena of an epoch, might--and this is indeed quite often the case--have also been present in the minds of the persons living in that epoch as an ideal to be striven for in practical life or as a maxim for the regulation of certain social relationships. This is true of the "idea" of "provision" and many other Canonist doctrines, especially those of Thomas Aquinas, in relationship to the modern ideal type of medieval "city economy" which we discussed above. The same is also true of the much talked of "basic concept" of economics: economic "value." From Scholasticism to Marxism, the idea of an objectively "valid" value, i.e., of an *ethical imperative* was amalgamated with an abstraction drawn from the empirical process of price formation. The notion that the "value" of commodities should be regulated by certain principles of natural law, has had and still has immeasurable significance for the development of culture--and not merely the culture of the Middle Ages. It has also influenced actual price formation very markedly. But what was meant and what can be meant by that *theoretical* concept can be made unambiguously clear *only* through precise, ideal-typical constructs. Those who are so contemptuous of the "Robinsonades" of classical theory should restrain themselves if they are unable to

replace them with better concepts, which in this context means dearer concepts.

Thus the causal relationship between the historically determinable idea which governs the conduct of men and those components of historical reality from which their corresponding ideal-type may be abstracted, can naturally take on a considerable number of different forms. The main point to be observed is that in *principle* they are both fundamentally different things. There is still another aspect: those "ideas" which govern the behavior of the population of a certain epoch i.e., which are concretely influential in determining their conduct, can, if a somewhat complicated construct is involved, be formulated precisely only in the form of an ideal type, since empirically it exists in the minds of an indefinite and constantly changing mass of individuals and assumes in their minds the most multifarious nuances of form and content, clarity and meaning. Those elements of the spiritual life of the individuals living in a certain epoch of the Middle Ages, for example, which we may designate as the "Christianity" of those individuals, would, if they could be completely portrayed, naturally constitute a chaos of infinitely differentiated and highly contradictory complexes of ideas and feelings. This is true despite the fact that the medieval church was certainly able to bring about a unity of belief and conduct to a particularly high degree. If we raise the question as to what in this chaos was the "Christianity" of the Middle Ages (which we must nonetheless use as a stable concept) and wherein lay those "Christian" elements which we find in the institutions of the Middle Ages, we see that here too in every individual case, we are applying a purely thought construct created by ourselves. It is a combination of articles of faith, norms from church law and custom, maxims of conduct, and countless concrete interrelationships which we have fused into an "idea." It is a synthesis which we could not succeed in attaining with consistency without the application of ideal-type concepts.

The relationship between the logical structure of the conceptual system in which we present such "ideas" and what is immediately given in empirical reality naturally varies considerably. It is relatively simple in cases in which one or a few easily formulated theoretical main principles as for instance Calvin's doctrine of predestination or clearly definable ethical postulates govern human conduct and produce historical effects, so that we can analyze the "idea" into a hierarchy of ideas which can be logically derived from those theses. It is of course easily overlooked that however important the significance even of the purely logically persuasive force of ideas --Marxism is an outstanding example of this type of force--nonetheless empirical-historical events occurring in men's minds must be understood as primarily *psychologically* and not logically conditioned. The ideal-typical character of such syntheses of historically effective ideas is revealed still more clearly when those fundamental main principles and postulates no longer survive in the minds of those individuals who are still dominated by ideas which were logically or associatively derived from them because the "idea" which was historically and originally fundamental has either died out or has in general achieved wide diffusion only for its broadest implications. The basic fact that the synthesis is an "idea" which *we* have created emerges even more markedly when those fundamental main principles have either only very imperfectly or not at all been raised to the level of explicit consciousness or at least have not taken the form of explicitly elaborated complexes of ideas. When we adopt this procedure, as it very often happens and must happen, we are concerned in these ideas, e.g., the "liberalism" of a certain period or "Methodism" or some intellectually unelaborated variety of "socialism," with a *pure* ideal type of much the same character as the synthetic "principles" of economic epochs in which we had our point of departure. The more inclusive the relationships to be presented, and the more many-sided their cultural *significance* has been, the *more* their comprehensive systematic exposition in a conceptual system approximates the character of an ideal type, and the less is

it possible to operate with *one* such concept. In such situations the frequently repeated attempts to discover ever *new* aspects of significance by the construction of new ideal-typical concepts is all the more natural and unavoidable. All expositions for example of the "essence" of Christianity are ideal types enjoying only a necessarily very relative and problematic validity when they are intended to be regarded as the historical portrayal of empirically existing facts. On the other hand, such presentations are of great value for research and of high systematic value for expository purposes when they are used as conceptual instruments for *comparison* with and the *measurement* of reality. They are indispensable for this purpose.

There is still another even more complicated significance implicit in such ideal-typical presentations. They regularly seek to be, or are unconsciously, ideal-types not only in the *logical* sense but also in the *practical* sense, i.e., they are *model types* which--in our illustration-- contain what, from the point of view of the expositor, *should* be and what *to him is* "essential" in Christianity *because it is enduringly valuable*. If this is consciously or--as it is more frequently--unconsciously the case, they contain ideals *to* which the expositor relates the value of Christianity. These ideals are tasks and ends towards which he orients his "idea" of Christianity and which naturally can and indeed doubtless always will differ greatly from the values which other persons, for instance, the early Christians, connected with Christianity. In this sense, however, the "ideas" are naturally no longer purely *logical* auxiliary devices, no longer concepts with which reality is compared, but ideals by which it is *value-judged*. Here it is no longer a matter of the purely theoretical procedure of treating empirical reality with respect to values but of *value judgments* which are integrated into the concept of "*Christianity*." Because the ideal type claims empirical *validity* here, it penetrates into the realm of the value *interpretation* of Christianity. The sphere of empirical science has been left behind and we are confronted with a profession of faith, not an ideal-

typical construct. As fundamental as this distinction is in principle, the confusion of these two basically different meaning of the term "idea" appears with extraordinary frequency in historical writings. It is always close at hand whenever the descriptive historian begins to develop his "conception" of a personality or an epoch. In contrast with the fixed ethical standards which Schlosser applied in the spirit of rationalism, the modern relativistically educated historian who on the one hand seeks to "understand" the epoch of which he speaks "in its own terms," and on the other still seeks to "judge" it, feels the need to derive the standards for his judgment from the subject-matter itself, i.e., to allow the "idea" in the sense of the *ideal* to emerge from the "idea" in the sense of the "ideal-type." The esthetic satisfaction produced by such a procedure constantly tempts him to disregard the line where these two ideal types diverge--an error which on the one hand hampers the value-judgment and on the other, strives to free itself from the responsibility for its own judgment. In contrast with this, the *elementary duty of scientific self-control* and the only way to avoid serious and foolish blunders requires a sharp, precise distinction between the logically *comparative* analysis of reality by ideal-types in the logical sense and the *value-judgment* of reality *on the basis of ideals*. An "ideal type" in our sense, to repeat once more, has no connection at all with *value-judgments*, and it has nothing to do with any type of perfection other than a purely *logical* one. There are ideal types of brothels as well as of religions; there are also ideal types of those kinds of brothels which are technically "expedient" from the point of view of police ethics as well as those of which the exact opposite is the case.

Though Ordering of Reality

The attempts to determine the "real" and the "true" meaning of historical concepts always reappear and never succeed in reaching their goal. Accordingly the synthetic concepts used by historians are either imperfectly defined or, as soon as the elimination of

ambiguity is sought for, the concept becomes an abstract ideal type and reveals itself therewith as a theoretical and hence "one-sided" viewpoint which illuminates the aspect of reality with which it can be related. But these concepts are shown to be obviously inappropriate as schema into which reality could be completely *integrated*. For none of those systems of ideas, which are absolutely indispensable in the understanding of those segments of reality which are meaningful at a particular moment, can exhaust its infinite richness. They are all attempts, on the basis of the present state of our knowledge and the available conceptual developments, to bring order into the chaos of those facts which we have drawn into the field circumscribed by our *interest*. The intellectual apparatus which the past has developed through the analysis, or more truthfully, the thought rearrangement of the immediately given reality, and through the latter's integration by concepts which correspond to the state of its knowledge and the focus of its interest, is in constant tension with the new knowledge which we can and *desire* to wrest from reality. The progress of cultural science occurs through this conflict. Its result is the perpetual reconstruction of those concepts through which we seek to comprehend reality. The history of the social sciences is and remains a continuous process passing from the attempt to order reality through the thought construction of concepts--the dissolution of the thought constructs so constructed through the expansion and shift of the scientific horizon--and the reformulation anew of concepts on the foundations thus transformed. It is not the error of the attempt to construct conceptual systems *in general* which is shown by this process-- every science, even simple descriptive history, operates with the conceptual stock-in-trade of its time. Rather, this process shows that in the cultural sciences concept-construction depends on the setting of the problem, and the latter varies with the content of culture itself. The relationship between concept and reality in the cultural sciences involves the transitoriness of all such syntheses. The great attempts at theory-construction in our science were always useful for revealing the

limits of the significance of those points of view which provided their foundations. The greatest advances in the sphere of the social sciences are substantively tied up with the shift in practical cultural problems and take the guise of a critique of concept-construction. Adherence to the purpose of this critique and therewith the investigation of the *principles of syntheses* in the social sciences shall be among the primary tasks of our journal.

In the conclusions which are to be drawn from what has been said, we come to a point where perhaps our views diverge here and there from those of many, and even the most outstanding, representatives of the Historical School, among whose offspring we too are to be numbered. The latter still hold in many ways, expressly or tacitly, to the opinion that it is the end and the goal of every science to order its data into a system of concepts, the content of which is to be acquired and slowly perfected through the observation of empirical regularities, the construction of hypotheses, and their verification, until finally a "completed" and *hence* deductive science emerges. For this goal, the historical-inductive work of the present-day is a preliminary task necessitated by the imperfections of our discipline. Nothing can be more suspect, from this point of view, than the construction and application of clear-cut concepts since this seems to be an over-hasty anticipation of the remote future.

This conception was, in principle, impregnable within the framework of the classical-scholastic epistemology which was still fundamentally assumed by the majority of the research-workers identified with the Historical School. The function of concepts was assumed to be the *reproduction* of "objective" reality in the analyst's imagination. Hence the recurrent references to the *unreality* of all clear-cut concepts. If one perceives the implications of the fundamental ideas of modern epistemology which ultimately derives from Kant; namely, that concepts are primarily thinking instruments for the intellectual mastery of empirical data and can

be only that, the fact that precise categorical concepts are necessarily ideal types will not cause him to desist from constructing them. The relationship between concept and historical research is reversed for those who appreciate this; the goal of the Historical School then appears as logically impossible, the concepts are not ends but are means to the end of understanding phenomena which are significant from concrete individual viewpoints. Indeed, it is just *because* the content of historical concepts is necessarily subject to change that they must be formulated precisely and clearly on all occasions. In their application, their character as ideal thought constructs should be carefully kept in mind, and the ideal-type and historical reality should not be confused with each other. It should be understood that since really definitive historical concepts are not in general to be thought of as an ultimate end in view of the inevitable shift of the guiding value-ideas, the construction of sharp and unambiguous concepts relevant to the concrete *individual* viewpoint which directs our interest at any given time, affords the possibility of clearly realizing the *limits* of their validity.

It will be pointed out and we ourselves have already admitted, that in a particular instance the course of a concrete historical event can be made vividly clear without its being analyzed in terms of explicitly defined concepts. And it will accordingly be claimed for the historians in our field, that they may, as has been said of the political historians, speak the "language of life itself." Certainly! But it should be added that in this procedure, the attainment of a level of explicit awareness of the viewpoint from which the events in question get their significance remains highly accidental. We are in general not in the favorable position of the political historian for whom the cultural views to which he orients his presentation are usually unambiguous-- or seem to be so. Every type of purely direct concrete description bears the mark of *artistic* portrayal. "Each sees what is in his own heart." Valid *judgments* always presuppose the *logical* analysis of what is concretely and

immediately perceived, i.e. the use of *concepts*. It is indeed possible and often aesthetically satisfying to keep these *in petto* but it always endangers the security of the reader's orientation, and often that of the author himself concerning the content and scope of his judgments.

The neglect of clear-cut concept-construction in practical discussions of practical, economic and social policy can, however, become particularly dangerous. It is really unbelievable to an outsider what confusion has been fostered, for instance, by the use of the term "value"--that unfortunate child of misery of our science, which can be given an unambiguous meaning *only* as an ideal type--or terms like "productive," "from an economic viewpoint," etcetera, which in general will not stand up under a conceptually precise analysis. *Collective* concepts taken from the language of everyday life have particularly unwholesome effects. In order to have an illustration easy for the layman to understand, let us take the concept of "agriculture" especially as it appears in the term "the interests of agriculture." If we begin with "the interests of agriculture" as the empirically determinable, more or less clear *subjective* ideas of concrete economically active individuals about their own interests and disregard entirely the countless conflicts of interest taking place among the cattle breeders, the cattle growers, grain growers, corn consumers, corn-using, whiskey-distilling farmers, perhaps not all laymen but certainly every specialist will know the great whirlpool of antagonistic and contradictory forms of value-relationship which are vaguely thought of under that heading. We will enumerate only a few of them here: the interests of farmers, who wish to sell their property and who are therefore interested in a rapid rise of the price of land; the diametrically opposed interest of those who wish to buy, rent or lease; the interest of those who wish to retain a certain property to the social advantage of their descendants and who are therefore interested in the stability of *landed* property; the antagonistic interests of those who, in their own or their children's

interests, wish to see the land go to the most enterprising farmer--or what is not exactly the same--to the purchaser with the most capital; the purely economic interest in economic freedom of movement of the most "competent farmer" in the business sense; the antagonistic interests of certain dominating classes in the maintenance of the traditional social and political position of their own "class" and thereby of their descendants; the interest of the socially subordinated strata of farmers in the decline of the strata which are above them and which oppress them; in occasional contradiction to this the interest of this stratum in having the leadership of those above them to protect their economic interests. This list could be tremendously increased, without coming to an end although we have been as summary and imprecise as possible.

We will pass over the fact that most diverse purely ideal values are mixed and associated with, hinder and divert the more "egoistic" interests in order to remind ourselves, above all, that when we speak of the "interests of agriculture" we think not *only* of those material and ideal values to which the farmers themselves at a given time relate their interests, but rather those partly quite heterogeneous value-ideas which *we* can relate with agriculture. As instances of these value-ideas related to agriculture we may cite the *interests in production* derived from the interests in cheap and qualitatively good food, which two interests are themselves not always congruous and in connection with which many clashes between the interests of city and country can be found, and in which the interests of the present generation need not by any means always be identical with the interests of coming generations; *interests in a numerous population*, particularly in a large rural population, derived either from the foreign or domestic interests of the "State," or from other ideal interests of the most diverse sort, e.g., the expected influence of a large rural population on the character of the nation's culture. These "population interests" can clash with the most diverse economic interests of all sections of the rural population, and indeed with all the present

interests of the mass of rural inhabitants. Another instance is the interest in a certain type of social stratification of the rural population, because of the type of political or cultural influence which will be produced therefrom; this interest can, depending on its orientation, conflict with every conceivable (even the most urgent present and future) interests of the individual farmers as well as those "of the State." To this is added a further complication: the "state," to the "interests" of which we tend to relate such and numerous other similar individual interests, is often only a blanket term for an extremely intricate tangle of value-ideas, to which it in its turn is related in individual cases, e.g., purely military security from external dangers; security of the dominant position of a dynasty or a certain class at home; interest in the maintenance and expansion of the formal-juridical unity of the nation for its own sake or in the interest of maintaining certain objective cultural values which in their turn again are very differentiated and which we as a politically unified people believe we represent; the reconstruction of the social aspects of the state according to certain once more diverse cultural ideas. It would lead us too far even merely to mention what is contained under the general label "state-interests" to which we can relate "agriculture." The illustrations which we have chosen and our even briefer analyses are crude and simplified. The non-specialist may now analyze similarly (and more thoroughly) for instance "the class interests of the worker" in order to see what contradictory elements, composed partly of the workers' interests and ideals, and partly of the ideals with which we view the workers, enter into this concept. It is impossible to overcome the slogans of the conflict of interests through a purely empirical emphasis on their "relative" character. The clear-cut, sharply defined analysis of the various possible standpoints is the only path which will lead us out of verbal confusion. The "free trade argument" as a *worldview* or as a valid *norm* is ridiculous but--and this is equally true whichever ideals of commercial policy the individual accepts--our underestimation of the heuristic value of the wisdom of the world's

greatest merchants as expressed in such ideal-typical formulae has caused serious damage to our discussions of commercial policy. Only through ideal-typical concept-construction do the viewpoints with which we are concerned in individual cases become explicit. Their peculiar character is brought out by the *confrontation* of empirical reality with the ideal-type. The use of the undifferentiated collective concepts of everyday speech is always a cloak for confusion of thought and action. It is, indeed, very often an instrument of specious and fraudulent procedures. It is, in brief, always a means of obstructing the proper formulation of the problem.

We are now at the end of this discussion, the only purpose of which was to trace the course of the hair-line which separates science from faith and to make explicit the *meaning* of the quest for social and economic knowledge. The *objective* validity of all empirical knowledge rests exclusively upon the ordering of the given reality according to categories which are *subjective* in a specific sense, namely, in that they present the *presuppositions* of our knowledge and are based on the presupposition of the *value* of those *truths* which empirical knowledge alone is able to give us. The means available to our science offer nothing to those persons to whom this truth is of no value. It should be remembered that the belief in the value of scientific truth is the product of certain cultures and is not a product of man's original nature. Those for whom scientific truth is of no value will seek in vain for some other truth to take the place of science in just those respects in which it is unique, namely, in the provision of concepts and judgments which are neither empirical reality nor reproductions of it but which facilitate its thought ordering in a valid manner. In the empirical social sciences, as we have seen, the possibility of meaningful knowledge of what is essential for us in the infinite richness of events is bound up with the unremitting application of viewpoints of a specifically particularized character, which, in the last analysis, are oriented on the basis of value-ideas. These value-

ideas are for their part empirically discoverable and analyzable as elements of meaningful human conduct, but their validity can *not* be deduced from empirical data as such. The "objectivity" of the social sciences depends rather on the fact that the empirical data are always related to those value-ideas which alone make them worth knowing and the significance of the empirical data is derived from these value-ideas. But these data can never become the foundation for the empirically impossible proof of the validity of the value-ideas. The belief which we all have in some form or other, in the meta-empirical validity of ultimate and final values, in which the meaning of our existence is rooted, is not incompatible with the incessant changefulness of the concrete viewpoints, from which empirical reality gets its significance. Both these views are, on the contrary, in harmony with each other. Life with its irrational reality and its store of possible meanings is inexhaustible. The *concrete* form in which value-relationship occurs remains perpetually in flux, ever subject to change in the dimly seen future of human culture. The light which emanates from those highest value-ideas always falls on an ever changing finite segment of the vast chaotic stream of events, which flows away through time.

Now all this should not be misunderstood to mean that the proper task of the social sciences should be the continual chase for new viewpoints and new thought constructs. *On the contrary*: nothing should be more sharply emphasized than the proposition that the knowledge of the *cultural significance of concrete historical events and developments* is exclusively and solely the final end which, among other means, concept-construction and the criticism of constructs also seek to serve. There are, to use the words of F. Th. Vischer, "subject matter specialists" and "interpretative specialists." The fact-greedy gullet of the former can be filled only with legal documents, statistical work-sheets and questionnaires, but he is insensitive to the refinement of a new idea. The gourmandise of the latter dulls his taste for facts by ever new intellectual subtilities. That genuine artistry which, among the

historians, Ranke possessed in such a grand measure, manifests itself through its ability to produce new knowledge by interpreting already *known* facts according to known viewpoints.

All research in the cultural sciences in an age of specialization, once it is oriented towards a given subject matter through particular settings of problems and has established its methodological principles, will consider the analysis of the data as an end in itself. It will discontinue assessing the value of the individual facts in terms of their relationships to ultimate value-ideas. Indeed, it will lose its awareness of its ultimate rootedness in the value-ideas in general. And it is well that should be so. But there comes a moment when the atmosphere changes. The significance of the unreflectively utilized viewpoints becomes uncertain and the road is lost in the twilight. The light of the great cultural problems moves on. Then science too prepares to change its standpoint and its thinking apparatus and to view the streams of events from the heights of thought. It follows those stars which alone are able to give meaning and direction to its labors:

The newborn impulse fires my mind,
I hasten on, his beams eternal drinking,
The Day before me and the Night behind,
Above me Heaven unfurled,
the floor of waves beneath me.

(*Faust*: Act I, Scene II)