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THE HUMANITIES AND SCIENCE

(Prospectus of an Article)

In Europe, theory regarding the nature of humanities and science retains still a traditional form. The definitions of science are generally positivistic, and the definitions of humanities are essentially classical. The struggle between the humanistic viewpoint and the scientific viewpoint has settled into trench warfare centered about such controversies as free will versus determinism, the "full view" versus the "partial view" of reality, the aesthetic view versus the materialistic view, and the humanities (defined in terms of traditional fields) against the natural sciences (social science being to a large extent ignored or regarded as social philosophy).

In America the recent aggressiveness of social sciences has caused the abandonment of trench warfare and has mounted a conflict that bids fair to shape the struggle of humanities versus science in a new context. This occurs because social science in the United States has developed a great variety of techniques and interests that impinge directly (rather than philosophically) upon the humanities. It has already sent a number of patrols into hostile territory, and the din of battle is mounting in the journals, the policies of foundations for supporting research, and in the debates over curricula and internal organizations of universities. Yet in the United States, as in Europe, the main line of resistance of the humanities is still European and traditional in character. It uses old and feeble arguments against the encroachments of behavioral science.

A revaluation or regrouping of humanities and social science is

therefore in order. This must take two forms: first, a purging of un-reliables from the humanities, meaning by this elements that deny foolishly to science a territory that can better be occupied by science; and second, counter-attacking by the humanities to gain territory improperly and in-defensively occupied by both the natural and social sciences.

In terms of the first objective, parts of the humanities are ripe for conversion to what is traditionally considered social science or behavioral science. Large portions of aesthetics, literary commentary and criticism, social commentary of literati, and pure social science interests that have substantive relevance to the humanities are ready for scientific statement and testing. Basic to this movement is the development of a logic of social science and humanities that would classify properly the aims, sentences, and symbolic devices of both endeavors. A number of recommendations for the improved training of humanists can be made. The philosophy of the curriculum needs reorientation.

Secondly, the humanities are philosophically in a position to counter-attack the pretensions of the natural and social sciences in several ways. New theories of epistemology, especially in the area of fictions, can be advanced to limit the basic position of simple, materialistic science. The great and widely misunderstood field of scientific hypothesis can be incorporated into the creative activity of humanists. The validity of science may be shown to be statistical rather than moral or absolute in nature. If this last task is accomplished, the humanities may be seen to be unquestionable in a) their testimony regarding the unique event b) their development of improbable situations, and c) their postulation of desirable discrete events and d) their development of axiology.