

The Humanities

And President Pendleton Herring of the Social Science Research Council says in *his* annual report:

It is well to remind ourselves that arguments of an "either-or" nature about science and the humanities serve little constructive purpose since we so greatly need all that can be drawn from either source. The joint committees that bring together scholars from a variety of humanistic and social science fields concerned with particular geographical areas, even in their administrative functions, demonstrate this essential unity. But in view of the recent discussion of the cleavage between the two cultures of science and the humanities, it is well to emphasize that the social sciences not

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only occupy an important position that might be considered a strategic middle ground, but also have their own distinctive characteristics and problems. *Since some aspects of some social science disciplines tend to merge with natural sciences, at one extreme, and certain aspects with the humanities, at the other,* there are inescapably areas of overlap and a tendency for some social scientists to identify themselves with one or the other of the two extremities. This of course is a personal choice that individual scholars freely make. But it is important that the integrity of the social science disciplines as such be recognized, and that "me too" attitudes with respect to either the natural sciences or the humanities be avoided.

The lines we italicized give us some trouble. The humanities are as much social science as the social sciences are. *Pari passu*, they are as near to natural sciences. Conversely, the social sciences are true humanities. Our reason: there is in every bit of reality as much science, natural or behavioral, as we please; there is also in every bit as much poetry and ethics as we wish. A subject-matter never determines its own nature as scientific or not. Man alone decides whether and when to treat it scientifically, and whether and when to breathe imagination and good into it.

An example occurs which is not part of Dr. Herring's report. The SSRC and the Council of Learned Societies are different not in theory but by historical accident. At the same time, there is nothing wrong with such accidents, unless people try to torture them into logical and theoretical distinctions. (which assuredly Dr. Herring does not do). Columbia and Chicago are both splendid universities doing much the same job; no one considers one or the other unnecessary. Indeed, perhaps several such organizations might be established—for different schools of thought, different levels of education (the NEA Council for the Social Studies—in secondary schools mostly—could fill one such role), different parts of the country and world, one for Catholics perhaps. The Ford Foundation has just resurrected an old agency of action research, the National Institute for Public Affairs, and filled its coffers for a new mission. Social science research councils are developing in various countries. The picture might get to be confusing but its vitality would have the flushed appeal of the young American that enthused Tocqueville and Whitman.

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