The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

The College of the Liberal Arts

THE ENTANGLEMENT OF FACT AND VALUE: EXPLORING THE AFFINITIES BETWEEN WEBER'S *VERSTEHEN* AND AMERICAN PRAGMATISM

A Thesis in

Sociology

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

December 2010

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ABSTRACT

Canonized by Max Weber's "Science as a Vocation", the distinction between fact and value and the principle of *Wertfreiheit* (value freedom) have become foundational to sociological practice. In scientific discourse, facts refer to observed information that is both verifiable and reliable. A fact denotes "the real." Values, variously defined, are conceptualized as part of an unobservable subjective realm. The epistemological assumptions supporting this position are rarely problematized. Considering the philosophical influences upon Weber's sociology, I view the fact/value dichotomy as an artifact of the Kantian separation of subject and object. Pragmatist philosophy offers an alternative to the Western tradition of dualism. A comparison of pragmatism with Weber's *verstehende Soziologie* reveals a surprising number of affinities and provides a framework for exploring the entanglement of fact and value. Using freedom as a paradigm case, I demonstrate the significance of recognizing the entanglement of fact and value for empirical research.

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Introduction

In recent years, pragmatism has enjoyed a renaissance across a number of disciplines. Within sociology, a growing body of scholarship reflects this renewed interest by exploring the relationship between pragmatist philosophy and sociological theory. This research has considered the links between pragmatism and the Chicago school as well as ties to classical sociological theory through the figure of Emilie Durkheim (Gross 1997; Joas 1993; Rawls 1997). However, little attention has been given to the similarities between the sociology of Max Weber (1864-1920) and classical pragmatism. This essay explores the parallels between Max Weber's *verstehende Soziologie* and pragmatist philosophy. In contrasting the two traditions, we uncover a number of commonalities with regards to the conceptualization of reality and the role of values in human cognition. However, key differences emerge. Reflected in alternative concepts of fact and value, these differences result in unique perspectives regarding the nature of scientific knowledge.

Pragmatism emerged as a philosophical movement within the United States around the 1870's. Conceived as a method of inquiry rather than doctrine, pragmatism challenged Western philosophy's tradition of basing legitimate knowledge upon some fixed or secure foundation. The central figures, Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914), William James (1842–1910) and John Dewey (1859–1952) shared the belief that knowledge was to be found in the practical consequences of action. Although first introduced by Peirce in 1878, the pragmatist movement did not receive much attention until the publication of *Pragmatism* by William James in 1907. Published in Germany the following year, the book immediately drew criticism. A torrent of commentaries appeared which painted pragmatism as a utilitarian philosophy supporting

American commercialism. Based largely on misunderstandings, the anti-pragmatist current held sway within German intellectual circles up until the late 20th century (Joas 1993).

Considering the history of pragmatism in Germany, the lack of research on its affinities with Weber's thought is unsurprising. Given the philosophy's poor reception, it would appear to be an unlikely influence upon trends within Weber's intellectual circle. Unlike Durkheim, Weber did not publically write or lecture about pragmatism. He was certainly aware of the movement having personally visited William James, during his trip to the United States in 1904. Yet apart from a footnote in the Protestant Ethic, we have little evidence regarding Weber's thoughts on the basic ideas of pragmatism (Weber 1958: 115 fn 66). Given the paucity of information, to speak of shared ideas between James and Weber is a matter of speculation. Therefore, the present study does not attempt to draw conclusions regarding mutual influence. Neither does this paper provide an analysis of "convergence" in the tradition of Parsons. We propose rather simply that there are affinities between Weber's thought and the central themes of pragmatism. Drawing particularly upon the work of Peirce and Dewey, we explore the similarities (and key differences) between pragmatism and Weberian *verstehende Soziologie* in an effort to explore alternative conceptualizations of scientific inquiry within the social sciences.

An analysis of the affinities between Weber and the classical pragmatists makes sense when one recognizes that underlying both traditions lays a similar question: How to reconcile approaches to social analysis modeled after the natural sciences with a humanist concern for the meaning of social action? On the tail end of the Industrial Revolution, the success of the natural sciences was undeniable. Increasingly, legitimate knowledge was defined in "scientific" terms with "science" understood to refer to natural laws and abstract universals discovered through empirical observation. Within the realm of social analysis, philosophers and historians began to

share the field with social scientists and a crisis over method emerged. The purpose and legitimacy of philosophy was challenged as positivist science questioned the validity of any knowledge not subject to empirical verification. Within the emerging social sciences, the controversy centered on the definition of scientific knowledge and whether there were inherent differences between social phenomena and the elements of "dead" nature. Within this context of fin de siècle crisis, Weber and the early pragmatists each attempted to humanize the practice of science by developing approaches to inquiry, which recognized the centrality of meaning.

A common theme emerges emphasizing the infinite complexity and temporality of reality, the central role of evaluation in concept formation, and the historicity and concept dependence of knowledge. Both perspectives shift the goal of social analysis away from the discovery of natural laws and the accumulation of social facts towards an examination of the meaningfulness of social processes. Yet in doing so, neither attempts to escape empiricism by returning to metaphysical quests for ultimate meaning and truth. Rather, their orientation turns towards a critical epistemology that emphasizes the fallibility and imperfection of theoretical constructs. Comparing the methodology of Weber and Dewey for example, we find that both "[suggest] a very complex interplay between theoretical ideas and social reality, implying that values and concepts contribute to constituting social facts as well as being shaped by them" (Antonio and Kellner 1994: 131). From this perspective, spectator theories of knowledge give way to probabilistic and action-centered notions of inquiry.

Nonetheless, these are separate projects emerging from different disciplines and as such motivated by distinct goals. While Weber and the classical pragmatists tackled similar issues, each individual brought their own personal genius to the re-conceptualization of science. Unsurprisingly, separate paths lead to unique and at times opposing destinations. One obvious

difference between pragmatism and Weber's *verstehende Soziologie* is the distinction between philosophy and social science.

As a social scientist, Weber oriented his methodological writings towards issues related to the scientific knowledge of empirical reality. However, he did not set out to develop a systematic epistemology of science. As noted by Eliaeson, Weber "had no interest in the philosophy of science for its own sake, yet he wrote a great deal on methodological questions" (2002: 3). In place of a formal treatise, Weber expresses his ideas in the form of essays written in response to important theoretical debates among his contemporaries. As a result, Weber's methodology is rather fragmented. Following Bruun, "the lack of systematical coherence in Weber's methodology with its antithetical elements, dichotomies, and logical inconsistencies should not be seen as an indication of intellectual indolecence on Weber's part" (2007: 2). Rather, these characteristics reflect an awareness of broader philosophical tensions, which Weber pragmatically leaves unresolved.

In particular, the methodological writings are oriented towards the controversy over method, the *Methodenstreit,* which developed in Germany during the late 19th century. Originally a conflict between historicist and marginalist traditions in economics, the *Methodenstreit* grew into a general crisis over the role of concept formation and the value of theoretical abstraction within the social sciences (Burger 1976; Eliaeson 2002). In approaching this specific issue, Weber was drawn into broader epistemological conflicts between realism and idealism. How to conceptualize reality and validate knowledge become unavoidable questions, which Weber tries to answer without falling into either the trap of reductionism or reification (Sica 1988). In this respect, Weber's problematic closely resembles that of pragmatism. However unlike the

pragmatists, Weber does not propose solutions to philosophical questions about reality and knowledge but rather focuses upon the practical demands of empirical science.

In contrast, pragmatism offers a direct critique of traditional epistemological debates and goes on to consider an entirely new question. Beginning with Peirce, pragmatism has been strongly oriented towards a critique of the Western epistemological tradition. Philosophical pragmatism is a diverse movement containing numerous perspectives. Even among the classical figures of Peirce, James and Dewey, one finds substantial differences in intellectual training and philosophical approach. However, a common feature among them is the rejection of realist *and* idealist epistemologies, which seek to place knowledge upon some fixed foundation of immutable truth.

In an early critique, Peirce considers the flaws of "first philosophies," which begin with ultimate and indubitable propositions (1958: 101). Whether based upon general ideals or primary sensations, such philosophies attempt to develop some "true" image of reality without fully considering how reality is actually experienced. Beginning with practical experience, it is impossible to deny certain features of reality such as its embeddedness within social context, language, and history. From a pragmatist perspective, theories of knowledge, which attempt to step outside of experience by constructing a realm of concepts or reducing it to the sensation of external powers, take very unrealistic approaches to truth. Recognizing that the rise of science demands a reconsideration of philosophical knowledge, pragmatism rejects metaphysics and turns to empirical reality. Yet, it does so with a form of empiricism fully based in experience as it *is* (i.e. situated and processual). Following Peirce, pragmatism refuses the contradistinction between philosophy and modern science (Colapietro 2006). Rather than opposing forms,

philosophical and scientific knowledge is valid to the extent that it conforms to rules of inquiry, which are based within experience and essentially normative.

As developed by Peirce and Dewey, this theme provides a compelling alternative to traditional conceptualizations of scientific knowledge, one that bears some resemblance to Weber's perspective on social science. Both traditions accept Kant's conclusion that knowledge cannot exceed the boundaries of experience and recognize that meaning is an essential feature of human experience. Through Peirce, pragmatism possesses a rich theory of semiotics that clarifies the central role of meaning by demonstrating how all experience is mediated through language. In contrast, Weber relies to a great extent upon neo-Kantian theories of concept formation. In what follows, we explore how these differences lead to alternative accounts of fact and value. We begin by reviewing the history of the fact/value dichotomy. Next, we consider how the notion appears within Weber's methodological work and contrast with pragmatist notions of entanglement. Finally, we present the sociological study of freedom as a paradigm case of fact/value entanglement.

The Fact/Value Dichotomy

What is a fact and how to be certain in knowing one? The answer to this seemingly simple question outlines the boundaries of legitimate knowledge and is therefore fundamental not only to social science and philosophy but to everyday thought. In scientific discourse, facts refer to observed information that is both verifiable and reliable. A fact denotes "the real." Values variously defined as "conceptions of the desirable", (Kluckhon 1951: 395), enduring beliefs about what is preferable (Rokeach 1973), or orienting and evaluative beliefs towards the world (Marini 2000), are conceptualized as part of an unobservable subjective realm (Hechter 1993). Although recognizing the social nature of values, empirical research typically applies individual-level measurements and focuses either upon the source of values or their role in motivating action (Hitlin & Piliavin 2004). Both facts and values are acknowledged as phenomena for empirical study. However, there is a clear separation between the two, which could be neatly summarized as: it is a fact that things are valued but the value is not fact.

The fact/value dichotomy arises from the logical separation of Is from Ought. While the "is-ought problem" is generally credited to David Hume, the transposition of this problem to the separation of fact and value is linked to the fin de siècle German theorists Arnold Kitz, Julius von Kirchmann, Heinrich Rickert, and Georg Simmel (Brecht 1959). In a general sense, Hume introduced the problem when, remarking upon the tendency to shift from Is to Ought, he decries:

"This change is imperceptible; but it is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, it is necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether unconceivable, how this new relation can be a

deduction from others, which are entirely different from it" (Hume [1739] 1978: 469-470).

In this statement, Hume discerns two key elements of the "is-ought" problem, one empirical and one logical. Firstly, "what is" and "what ought to be" are considered as categorically different phenomena. Statements about "what is" reference Being in the ontological sense of reality and existence. Statements about "what ought to be" express a moral or ethical imperative about what should occur at some future point in time. This leads to the empirical question of how to verify an integral relation between Is and Ought. Secondly and in relation to this, a logical problem arises since a valid inference cannot add new meaning to the original premise. In a broad sense, these insights provide a foundation for the "is-ought" problem. However, Hume develops his critique from a position of skepticism primarily concerned with the foundations of all knowledge. Following Brecht, "his attack … was concentrated, not on fusions of Is and Ought, but on the belief that we even know much about the Is of external facts" (1959: 540). It is not until the issue resurfaces in Germany during the late 19th century that the divide between "what is" and "what ought to be" enters philosophic discourse in a manner consistent with modern discussions of the separation of fact and value (Brecht 1959).

Beginning in the 1860's, Arnold Kitz and Julius von Kirchmann develop a line of reasoning, which relates directly to the contemporary fact/value dichotomy.[1] Prior to this, the works of Kant and John Stuart Mill come close to establishing a logical divide. However, each lapse into a fusion of Is and Ought, either by proposing bridges between them (Kant) or by re-

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[1] Due to the lack of English translations, I refer to Brecht (1959) in this review of Kitz and von Kirchmann.

establishing an absolute standard based upon "what is" (Mill). In 1864, Kitz produced a small essay entitled *Seyn und Sollen* (Is and Ought), which re-introduced the problem. Receiving little attention even in his own time, this work describes the categorical difference between "to be" and "ought to be" and rejects unison between them whether in nature, reason, or the "will" (Brecht 1959). Shortly thereafter, von Kirchmann authored a book on law and morals challenging Kant's use of reason to bridge the Is/Ought divide. Following Kitz and von Kirchmann, the "is-ought problem" is increasingly oriented towards setting the boundaries of knowledge as defined by science. With the contributions of Heinrich Rickert and Georg Simmel in the 20th century, a corollary thesis emerges pertaining to the separation of fact and value.

In 1892, Rickert and Simmel each published books dealing with the "is-ought problem".[2] Together, their works were widely influential to the widespread acceptance of the Is/Ought divide in science (Brecht 1959). Their positions are especially relevant to evaluations of the fact/value dichotomy within Max Weber's work. The three men were close intellectual associates and shared a common interest in establishing the legitimacy of the cultural sciences. The exact nature of the intellectual relationship between Rickert and Weber is open to debate. However, it is clear that Weber referred to Rickert's basic ideas when developing his methodology for the social sciences (Bruun 2007; Burger 1976; Eliaeson 2002). Considering Weber and Simmel, we find intellectual projects, which are quite distinct. Nonetheless, they were familiar on both professional and personal levels and, despite differences in theoretical inclination and economic position, mutually admired each other's work (Sica 2004). Points of convergence do appear particularly with regards to theories of knowledge and criteria for truth.

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[2] See Rickert *De Gegenstand der Erkenntnis* (1892 Tubingen) and Simmel *Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft* (1892 Berlin).

Simmel and Weber both accepted the clear separation between a proposition of fact and the value of that fact (Bruun 2007). Briefly, we consider the approaches taken by Rickert and Simmel to the fact/value dichotomy.

The neo-Kantian philosopher, Heinrich Rickert brought a unique re-formulation of the "is-ought problem" directly to bear upon debates concerning the validity of knowledge within the social sciences. Rickert based the Is/Ought divide upon a gulf between Being ("what is", reality, existence) and Meaning (Brecht 1959). It goes beyond our purposes to provide an in-depth discussion of Rickert's philosophical system as it relates to scientific knowledge. However, a few details are necessary to understand how meaning relates to the Is/Ought divide. In opposition to epistemological realism, Rickert begins with "reality as experienced" (Oakes 1988). Knowledge of reality proceeds by way of concepts, which are non-existent abstractions from reality. As expressed by concepts, "meaning" may be valid or invalid but it is not real. The "ought," conceptualized as norms, is a special case of meaning deeply infused with value (Brecht 1959). "Values" represent that which appeals to our interest and, as concepts, are also nonexistent. Hence, "ought", "meaning", and "values" are separated from facts, which are the brute perceptions of experience. These ideas are embedded within a larger theory validating the "cultural sciences" that we cannot go into here. At this point, it is sufficient to note that Rickert begins to apply notions of fact and value in a manner indicative of a transition from the philosophical divide of Is/Ought to the separation of fact and value within epistemology of science.

Turning to Simmel, we find an even more forceful attack on the relationship between Is and Ought. Simmel approaches the issue empirically, formally, and logically and in each

instance maintains the impossibility of a fusion between the two realms.[3] Empirically, he

recognizes that "ought" may be experienced as feeling but that this subject centered experience

cannot be conveyed to someone else who has not felt the same experience. The relativity of

perception leads to the problem of subjectivity. By situating the "ought" entirely within

subjective experience, Simmel concludes that there is no way to develop an objectively valid

definition of "what ought to be". Considered formally, the "ought" as a concept represents a

generalized way of thinking. As such, it is a methodological concept represented grammatically

by the imperative form. Along similar lines as Rickert, Simmel rejects that elements of reality in

their particularity can be derived from a generalized method adaptable to any content (Oakes

1988). From the perspective of logic, he presents the familiar argument that an inference cannot

add new meaning to the original premise. Developing this idea further, he returns to the central

problem of categorical difference. "What is" and "what ought to be" are two different types of

original datum. Simmel refers us to the primacy of experience and follows in the neo-Kantian

tradition by basing knowledge (both of Is and Ought) within concepts, which are non-existent

abstractions.

Following the contributions of Rickert and Simmel, the Is/Ought divide and its corollary,

the fact/value dichotomy, became widely accepted. With regards to scientific knowledge, Max

Weber took the separation of fact and value as given and did not attempt to substantiate it further

(Bruun 2007). The fact/value dichotomy appears rather straightforwardly within Weber's

thought and is expressed most famously with his principle of value freedom (*Wertfreiheit).*

However, there are indications of tension, an often-noted feature of Weber's work (Sica 1988).

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[3] Given the lack of an English translation, I utilize Brecht (1959) as a reference for this review of Simmel's
treatment of the "is-ought problem."

Specifically, Weber accepts the subjective nature of values while at the same time holding that value judgments are central to the selection and conceptualization of objects of investigation. In what follows, we explore this tension by contrasting Weber's principle of value freedom with his broader methodological program. Uncovering parallels with pragmatism, we reflect upon the pragmatist conception of fact/value entanglement and consider its incorporation into Weber's *verstehende Soziologie.*

The Principle of Value Freedom

Within the social sciences, Max Weber's principle of value freedom (*Werfreiheit*) provides one of the most influential applications of the fact/value dichotomy to scientific practice. Taken at face value, the principle applies a rather unambiguous rule of logic to methodology within the social sciences. Upon closer inspection, Weber's discussion of value freedom reveals a degree of ambivalence towards the fact/value dichotomy. Indications of ambivalence are seen both within the content and rhetorical structure of Weber's demand for a "value free" social science. Following Bruun, "Weber advances only one *argument* for his demand for value freedom: the fact that the sphere of scientific inquiry and the value sphere are logically absolutely different" (2007: 63). Yet, the logical argument receives less attention than the practical and normative concerns, which motivate Weber's appeal for "value free" social science. On the one hand, this might reflect Weber's focus upon empirical research as opposed to metatheory. However, we propose that it is also indicative of a tension between value freedom and value commitment that extends throughout Weber's work. Considering the scope of Weber's claim, we find further indications of ambivalence in that Weber limits the separation of fact and value to the realm of scientific inquiry. In what follows, we demonstrate how this tension and ambivalence is reflected within Weber's methodological approach and consider the implications for alternative interpretations of the meaning of "value free" social science.

Commentaries generally find Weber's acceptance of "the most basic of all dichotomies: that between "is" and "ought" to lead rather straightforwardly into a distinction between empirical fact and value-judgment (Weber 1975: 187 n93). Following Hennis, such interpretations, which "seem to be established knowledge on the research on Weber," mistakenly understand *Werfreiheit* primarily as a methodological concept (1994: 114). This position is

exemplified by Talcott Parsons who "[i]n 1964, in a celebrated lecture at the Heidelberg Conference of Sociology commemorating Weber's 100th birthday [...] noted: 'The concept of *Werfreiheit* can be considered the basis for Weber's methodological position'" (Hennis 1994: 114). Yet upon closer inspection, it is not at all clear that the demand for value freedom was primarily motivated by methodological or epistemological concerns. For one, Weber was openly skeptical and condescending towards metatheoretical work. Likening the methodological debates of his day to a "plague of frogs", Weber rejected the idea that scientific method could be defined through logical argument (Weber in Oakes 1975: 13). On the contrary, "methodology can only be self-reflection on the means which have *proven* to be valuable in actual research" (Weber in Oakes 1975: 15). Such an emphasis on praxis indicates that Weber's demand for value freedom rested upon concerns apart from extrinsic logic.

Within the essay on objectivity, Weber introduces the need for value freedom by noting that the emergence of social science has not been "accompanied by a formulation of the logical (*prinzipielle*) distinction between 'existential knowledge,' i.e., knowledge of what 'is,' and 'normative knowledge,' i.e., knowledge of what 'should be'" (1949a: 51). Yet while Weber identifies the problem of social science directly with this dichotomy, he is not primarily concerned with the subjectivity of values, "a truism he easily accepts" (Sica 1988: 151). Rather, Weber is mainly interested in establishing parameters for the scientific criticism of social policy. Weber continually places emphasis upon the *practical* role of the social sciences in "the education of judgment about" and "technical criticism" of social problems (1949a: 50, 53). Considering the implications of the division between normative and existential knowledge, Weber concludes that:

"[I]t 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 … 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?" (1949a: 52, italics added).

Weber goes on to link such criticism directly to evaluations of the means and ends of

social action (1949a: 52-53). Within the following sections, Weber spends considerable effort

outlining the limits of science with regards to the selection of ultimate ends with the final

conclusion that "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" (1949a: 54). The emphasis

upon social action highlights the practical and normative (as opposed to methodological)

motivations behind the demand for value freedom. To demonstrate more clearly how this may be

the case, it is useful to consider particular formulations of the principle in relation to the implied

proscriptions for scientific practice.

Generally speaking, the principle of value freedom calls for the separation of the sphere

of values (A) and the sphere of scientific inquiry (B). Following Bruun, this can be expressed

formally in three different ways: "1) 'A must be kept free from elements of B'; 2) 'B must be

kept free from elements of A'; 3) 'A and B must be kept free from elements of each other'"

(2007: 61). The three formal expressions are of two classes, which are distinct in substantive

content and rhetorical form. The last statement asserts a symmetrical (i.e. complete) separation of

the two spheres, which implies equal emphasis upon removing value elements from scientific

inquiry and removing elements of scientific inquiry from the value sphere. Use of this

formulation is conducive to the straightforward application of a logical rule to method and provides few rhetorical advantages. In contrast, the asymmetry of the first two expressions suggests ambiguity regarding the exact nature of the separation between realms and allows for the placement of emphasis upon particular implications. According to Bruun, "[c]lose textual analysis shows that, whenever Weber is stating the principle of value freedom in general terms, he tends to express it in either of the two asymmetrical forms, whereas the symmetrical formulation is very rarely met with" (2007: 62). Furthermore, Weber favors "the asymmetrical formulation, which, properly speaking, does not demand the value freedom of scientific inquiry, but the *freedom of the value sphere from allegations of scientific demonstrability*" (Bruun 2007: 62). In what follows, we return to the text and consider the practical and normative implications of Weber's asymmetrical formulations.

Even limiting the search to "Objectivity", one finds multiple expressions of the principle of value freedom with the form that "the value sphere should be kept free of elements from the sphere of scientific inquiry." For example, Weber states that "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" (1949a: 52). Here, the emphasis upon practical action is clear with the implication being that action is guided by norms and ideals, which individuals must be free to form. However, this position does not simply indicate respect for individual autonomy. It expresses a much more forceful demand that social action be based upon will and conscience. According to Weber, "[t]o apply the results of … analysis in the making of a decision, … , 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 ….The act of choice itself is his own responsibility" (1949a: 53). Within this passage, the demand for value

freedom might easily be interpreted as a normative proscription disallowing the scientific justification of acts, which are fundamentally the responsibility of autonomous individuals.

Turning to the "principle of the *value freedom of science*", one finds very few general statements demanding that scientific inquiry remain free of value elements (Bruun 2007: 62). In fact, Bruun's (2007) textual analysis uncovers only one clear statement reflecting this asymmetrical aspect. This is the famous outburst at the 1909 congress of the Association for Social Policy (*Verein für Socialpolitik*) where Weber declares that "To mix up prescriptive demands with scientific questions is the work of the Devil"" (Weber in Bruun 2007: 62). Instead, one finds more subtle expressions calling upon researchers to openly approach reality, set aside ones illusions, and accept inconvenient facts. Weber notes that "[n]owhere are the interests of science more poorly served in the long run than in those situations where one refuses to see the uncomfortable facts and the realities of life in all their starkness" (Weber 1949a: 57-58). [4] From this perspective, "value-free" signifies "facing reality with an open countenance, unprotected by the soothing certainties of tradition or the optimism of modern ideas" (Hennis 1994: 115). Weber states that "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" (1949a: 72). This passages highlights Weber's recognition that social science is embedded within the very reality it seeks to analyze. Accordingly, the removal of values from

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[4] Weber's demand that we face the uncertainty and precariousness of reality shares an affinity with the pragmatist rejection of philosophical "quests for certainty" (Dewey [1926] 1960). We elaborate upon this similarity and others within the next section.

the realm of science takes on great importance as a *practical rule* of inquiry keeping researchers from overlooking facts or findings that run counter to their own personal interests.

Upon closer scrutiny, the scarcity of clear asymmetrical statements emphasizing the removal of values from the sphere of science is not at all surprising. In fact, the categorical removal of all value elements from scientific inquiry would be inconsistent with Weber's theory of knowledge, which relies heavily upon neo-Kantian notions of experiential reality, value relation and concept formation. [5] Within this framework, reality is an "infinite multitude" the perception of which occurs as humans relate particular aspects to their own values and interests. Weber accepts that human perception is mediated by values. However, this complicates his effort to reject value judgments from science. To get around the contradiction, he must differentiate between forms of knowledge (science vs. commonsense) in a manner that neutralizes the role of values within scientific investigation. Weber draws upon Rickert in this endeavor. However, there are inconsistencies with his approach, which suggests a degree of ambivalence towards the distinctions. I propose that Weber's position reflects a tension between subjectivism and objectivism that suggests a reconsideration of the fact/value dualism.

Before illustrating the ambiguities within Weber's approach, it may be helpful to review the general framework presented by Rickert. In *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science*, Rickert takes up the general issue of history's status as a scientific discipline. Through a

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[5] At this point, I do not wish to make claims about the exact nature of the neo-Kantian influences within Weber's thought. Weber had broad access to neo-Kantian ideas, as it was a general fixture of the intellectual atmosphere within Germany at the end of the 19th century (Turner 1990). Some scholars, such as Guy Oakes (1988), point to Heinrich Rickert as a primary influence. While Weber openly used many of Rickert's basic ideas and terminology, his unique interpretations suggest a heuristic application (Bruun 2007).

series of precise logical arguments, Rickert defines history as an empirical science concerned with reality in its individual and concrete aspects. In contrast, the natural sciences seek universal laws through generalization and abstraction. Rickert describes empirical reality as an "infinite multiplicity" that becomes intelligible through the use of concepts, which are formed upon the basis of practical and theoretical valuations. In everyday life, commonsense meaning is brought to the world as individuals respond practically to select aspects of experience, which seem to relate to certain values and hence become important. This process entails the development of concepts, the most basic of which are words, which allow individuals to judge and evaluate the surrounding world and establish goals to guide action (Bruun 2007: 119).

Practical concept formation is not sufficient for the task of science as it is both imprecise and tainted with subjectivity. Rickert answers the demand for scientific "objectivity" by distinguishing between practical valuation and theoretical value relation, which proceeds with reference to values that are "generally valid." Within the natural sciences, concept formation is guided by an common interest in generalization, which by reducing reality to only its "general" qualities becomes further removed from the individual objects that constitute empirical reality (Bruun 2007: 116). On the other hand, the historical sciences are concerned with understanding "what individual phenomena really are or where" (Bruun 2007: 117). "Value relation simply indicates that a certain phenomenon is found to be "worthy of" interest, "worth" assessing – paradoxically speaking: worth evaluating" (Bruun 2007: 119). The value relations of the historian escape the subjectivity inherent to practical evaluations because they reference values that are 1) only relevant to the time period understudy and 2) are regarded as generally valid to the "community" that the historian addresses (Bruun 2007). Nevertheless, the notion of "empirically general" values relies upon a combination of empirical and normative elements in

the sense that "Rickert defines culture as that which *ought to be* the concern of all the members of a community, and which one may *demand* from them that they care for" (Bruun 2007).

In many respects, Weber closely follows Rickert's formulations of value relation and concept formation. However, there are points of divergence. Rickert attempts to develop a general theory of concepts sufficient for inquiry both within the natural and social sciences and therefore considers reality in its most basic and "immediate" aspects (Bruun 2007). Weber, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the role of theoretical abstraction within the social and economic sciences (Eliaeson 2002) and "tends to focus his argument on reality as actually experienced" (Bruun 2007: 128). Motivated by broad philosophical debates over the definition of science, Rickert takes a highly technical approach that clearly outlines distinctions between practical and theoretical valuation. In contrast, Weber tends to blur this distinction. His discussions emphasize reality in its "realistic" aspects and the practical interests towards which value judgments are generally oriented.

Within "Objectivity", Weber provides one of the clearest discussions of empirical reality.

"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" (Weber 1949a: 72).

There are some key points to glean from this passage. First, Weber's reference to life as "concrete" and made up of "emerging and disappearing events" demonstrates clear recognition of the temporal, dynamic and embedded nature of empirical reality. Secondly, Weber describes the experience of reality as immediate and infinite as it occurs through *conscious reflection*. We find a similar statement within *Rosher and Knies*: "*every* individual event, no matter how simple it may appear, includes an intensively *infinite* multiplicity of properties – if, that is one *chooses* to conceive it in this way" (Weber 1975: 124). As noted previously by Bruun, "Weber does not claim that we ever perceive reality in its infinite and immediate aspect, but only that it can be demonstrated that the reality confronting us in our daily lives is the structured version of something infinite and boundless" (2007: 128).

Within the context of everyday life, individuals experience commonsense reality as structured that is, as something particular, organized and comprehensible. For Weber, this is reality in its realistic aspect, "the *real*, i.e., concrete, individually-structured configuration of our cultural life" (1949a: 74). Adopting an entirely nominalist account, Weber concludes that not only cultural life but "universal relationships" and "social cultural conditions" are all "individually-structured" (Weber 1949a: 74). There are two key aspects of this structuration. On the one hand, the temporal nature of existence means that all events are "historical individual(s)", i.e. unique and passing moments structured by time. Yet, time alone does not define reality as such but rather it is human interest that serves to order segments of the infinite stream and transform it into "culture". ""Culture" is a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process, a segment on which *human beings* confer meaning and significance" (Weber 1949a: 81). This is clearly a general statement about how it is in everyday life that we can perceive reality as something ordered and hence, intelligible. Human beings take a practical value

orientation to particular aspects of the world creating a cultural reality, which is the purview of social science.

It is at this point that we encounter the notion of value relation, which Weber adopts from Heinrich Rickert. As we will see, the central role of valuation in ordering the "infinite events" and "immediate situations" that confront us in everyday life has a necessary corollary within the realm of scientific investigation. It is for this reason that we do not find clear statements regarding the "principle of the *value freedom science.*" To demand that social science remain absolutely free of values would be inconsistent with Weber's definition of the "cultural sciences" as "those disciplines which analyze the phenomena of life in terms of their cultural significance" (1949a: 76). A certain value-orientation towards the objects of inquiry is essential in order for the scientific investigation of the social world to proceed. In fact, it is for exactly this reason that Weber rejects positivist attempts to reduce social research to the discovery of "natural laws." He states:

> "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 …, since the significance of cultural events presupposes a *value-
> orientation* towards these events" (Weber 1949a: 76).

What is relevant to our current purpose is the fact that Weber understands the process of value relation to bring structure to reality as an object of scientific investigation just as it does in everyday life. Speaking directly of scientific inquiry, Weber asserts that:

> "A chaos of "existential judgments" about countless individual events
> would be the only result of a serious attempt to analyze reality "without

presuppositions." ….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" (Weber 1949a: 78).

This position closely follows Heinrich Rickert's argument for the scientific status of history, which proposes value relation as the central mechanism by which elements of immediate reality enter into historical concepts. While Weber openly adopts this basic idea, his acceptance of Rickert's distinction between theoretical value relation and practical value orientation is ambiguous. We find that the social sciences depend upon both practical and theoretical value relation as the "social scientist will often have to pass through a phase of practical valuation in order to be able to assume his theoretical role" (Bruun 2007: 134). For Weber, the separation of the two roles through the demand for value freedom is a matter of principle and not purely a methodological technique. The interlinking of practical and theoretical valuation in the actual process of investigation suggests a more permeable divide between scientific and commonsense knowledge, to which Weber intimates but does not commit.

We see within Weber's discussion of scientific knowledge a conflict between two positions. On the one hand, Weber accepts the Kantian paradigm and its opposition of appearance and the "thing-in-itself." His adoption of neo-Kantian theories of concept formation and value relation lead to an understanding of experience as mediated through valuations and abstract concepts, which are subjective and apart from "reality." Yet whereas Kant and the neo-Kantians maintain a path towards "true" knowledge via transcendent (or general) values, Weber rejects the possibility of knowing any value as fact. This places the human mind behind a

permanent veil of subjectivity, which blocks access to the "real." The role of values within scientific knowledge means that its claim upon "truth" is also relative. He states:

> "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." (Weber 1949a: 110).

Nonetheless Weber holds onto science as a privileged method for obtaining objectively valid and true knowledge, when in the very next sentence, he continues:

> "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 analytical ordering in a valid manner." (Weber 1949a: 110-111).

Given the impossibility of "real" concepts and judgments, Weber turns to a conception of truth that not unlike the pragmatist notion refers to the world of action. Truth is recast as "objective possibility" and validated with reference to *Verstehen* (understanding). We find expression of this position when he contrasts his approach to positivism by saying, "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'" (Weber 1949a: 80).

Weber continues to draw upon Kant in locating the possibility of objective knowledge within the notion of causality, in its necessity not just for a subject but for all (Brand 1979).[6] By linking objectivity to causation, Weber transposes the notions of fact and value on to those of means and ends. While the reality of concepts is indeterminable, they can provide analytical tools for comprehending the relation of means to ends and thereby gain objective validity to the extent that causal explanations obtain.[7] However, ends remain in a subjective realm beyond objective understanding since the imputation of an end to a given action necessarily reflects the outside observer's values (Kim 2008). Although mediated by values, objective knowledge (fact) may nonetheless approach truth in a probabilistic sense to the extent that particular means are plausibly demonstrated to cause certain ends. Values (or ends) cannot similarly be known in terms of "objective possibility" because Weber maintains the separation of subjective mind from external reality.

The discussion of means/ends is an important theme within Weber's work. His frequent opposition of means and ends reflects an empirical approach that ultimately settles questions of abstract logic within concrete worlds of social action. Such a commitment to empiricism resonates strongly with pragmatist perspectives focusing upon "practical consequences."

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[6] See also McLemore (1984) for a fine summary of Weber's notion of causality and the different forms of analysis within the sciences. For Weber, the goal of science is causal explanation understood in the probabilistic sense that "what occurs has to occur because of antecedent conditions" (McLemore 1984: 283). In this respect, Weber saw no difference between the cultural and natural sciences.

[7] Some examples of what this means in application are provided by Gerth and Mills in their introduction to *From Max Weber* (Weber 1946b). For instance, Weber's analysis of important historical figures such as Caesar, Napoleon, or Calvin considers their influence upon institutions rather than the charismatic leaders themselves. The focus is not upon the personalities of Caesar or Calvin but the continuities of history arising through Caesarism and Calvinism.

However while Weber emphasizes the clear separation of means and ends, pragmatism, especially as represented by John Dewey, draws heavily upon their interdependence. These differences reflect distinct conceptualizations of reality and experience, which stand at the crux of the fact/value dichotomy. Weber's epistemological position shares some similarities with pragmatism. By beginning with reality as experienced, Weber sees that perception and knowledge are mediated by way of concepts. However, he adopts a mentalist theory of concepts, which remains within the shadow of subjectivity. Turning to a discussion of pragmatism, we explore an alternative approach to mediated experience provided by C.S. Peirce. After considering how Peirce overcomes the subjectivity problem, we turn to the philosophy of John Dewey. By comparing Weber's discussion of means and ends to Dewey's notion of ends-in-view, we attempt to recast the fact/value dualism as a matter of distinction rather than difference.

Weber's Affinities (and Divergence) with Pragmatism

In "The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality'", Weber recognizes that at times an outside perspective is needed to perceive those "presuppositions which are so self-evident to us" (Weber 1949a: 7). I take this as support for moving outside the bounds of sociological theory to explore Weber's epistemology from a more philosophical perspective. Weber's thought shares a number of affinities with pragmatism. Both embed human knowledge within history, culture and processes of evaluation. In addition, both share a belief in human agency and perceive change as a constant through time. However, clear differences emerge with regard to the possibility of comprehending the "real" and the "true." The heritage of Western dualism prevents Weber from overcoming the separation of fact and value and continues what from the pragmatist perspective is an unnecessary epistemological question.

The pragmatist response to the question of "how we know what we know" refers us back to experience and the practical consequences of events. In the essay 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear", Peirce introduces the pragmatist maxim in the following terms:

"consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive
the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of those effects is the
whole of our conception of the object" (1958:124).

While pragmatists vary in how the maxim is clarified, they agree that knowledge is based in experimental thought. The focus upon "practical consequences" reflects an orientation towards the future that presupposes the world and the entirety of its contents are dynamically interrelated and historically situated processes. By emphasizing process over stasis, a pragmatist perspective moves away from traditional epistemology, which seeks enduring and certain boundaries for

knowledge. The focus becomes defining the *practice* of inquiry in terms of self-corrective and experimental methods that allow for the malleability of belief in the face of changing circumstances. The pragmatist notion of knowledge is embodied, placed within socio-historical context and dependent upon continual reference to future consequences.

For Weber, the social sciences at least share a very similar concern for the "practical significance" of concepts (1949a: 94). However, Weber continues to maintain a distinction between "concept" and "reality" that pragmatism rejects. In this respect, Weber's Kantian pedigree shines through as he remains (albeit uneasily) within a world of appearances, which, without some transcendent "ought," is permanently shut off from the "thing-in-itself." While Weber applies the neo-Kantian theory of concept formation to inquiry within the social sciences, he attempts to hold on to the realistic element of everyday life by establishing a clear differentiation between scientific and commonsense knowledge. In contrast, pragmatism begins with a general notion of inquiry constructed upon an ideal that is equally valid for scientific investigation as it is for everyday life. By considering the pragmatist notion of inquiry in detail, we illustrate a potential resolution to the subjectivity problem and accompanying fact/value dualism.

Before entering into the theoretical contributions of pragmatism, a note on my approach to the literature is in order. Pragmatism is a broad philosophical tradition, in which a diverse range of perspectives are found. In this paper, I draw primarily upon the classical works of C.S. Peirce and John Dewey. Although there are differences between the two authors, each provides ideas, which resolve key aspects of Weber's problematic. In this paper, I speak generally of "pragmatism" when referring to the broad principles that most authors writing within this tradition support. When discussing the ideas of Peirce or Dewey, I reference them directly. In

what follows, I draw upon the affinities between Weber, Peirce and Dewey and consider points of divergence. This allows for a discussion of how contributions from pragmatism resolve the epistemological tensions within the work of Max Weber.

As the founder of pragmatism, Peirce's ideas concerning inquiry, meaning and truth laid the groundwork for an anti-foundationalist epistemology that effectively addresses the problem of subjectivity. To see how this is the case, we begin with Peirce's consideration of experience. Both Weber and Peirce owe a debt to Kant for identifying the boundaries of knowledge with the limits of experience (Bruun 2007; Colapietro 2006). However, Peirce jettisons the idea of a "thing-in-itself", which presupposes a reality that stands outside of all possible experience. Peirce grants that the perception of reality is completely reliant upon the senses and that "the appearances of sense [are] only *signs* of [reality]" (1958: 83, italics added). This is to say that experience is mediated; sense perception itself manifests as signs. Yet, "the realities which they represent [are] not the unknowable cause of sensation, but *noumena*, or intelligible conceptions which are the last products of the mental action which is set in motion by sensation" (Peirce 1958: 83, italics original). If *all* knowledge begins with experience, the idea of a reality that lay beyond all *possible* experience is incognizable. While Kant recognizes that human perception is essentially a process of abstraction, he fails to follow this through to its logical conclusion. Peirce states:

> "Ignorance and error can only be conceived as correlative to a real knowledge and
> truth, which latter are of the nature of cognitions. Over against any cognition, there is
> an unknown but knowable reality; but over against all possible cognition, there is
> only the self-contradictory. In short, cognizability (in its widest sense) and *being* are
> not merely metaphysically the same, but are synonymous terms. " (Peirce 1958: 35)

Peirce recognizes that there is no jumping outside of experience. The limits of experience not only define the boundaries of knowledge but of meaning as well (Colapietro 2006: 17). What is more, appearance is not apart from but is in some way continuous with the external world. The abstract concepts of human cognition are not mere figments of the subjective mind but real signs by which the external world is disclosed to us. The reality of the sign is a crucial point of divergence with Weber. Following Kant, Weber adopts a nominalist account that understands abstraction as moving away from reality. Peirce, on the other hand, proposes that "a thing in the general is as real as in the concrete" (Peirce 1958:83). Utilizing whiteness as an example, he points to experience as revealing "real things that possess whiteness" (Peirce 1958: 83). Although whiteness emerges through "an act of thought knowing it," it is nonetheless real as "that thought is not an arbitrary or accidental one…, but one which will hold *in the final opinion*" (Peirce 1958: 83, italics added).

The recognition that signs mediate perception leads Peirce to seriously contemplate the emergence and clarification of meaning. The result is his general theory of signs, which by asserting the reality of concepts provides an avenue for overcoming the problem of subjectivity. Peirce's pivotal contribution is his definition of semiosis (or sign-action), which understands meaning as a triadic relation between object, sign, and interpretant. By moving away from the dualism of subject and object, it is possible to see how concepts escape the purely subjective realm. Traditional accounts place the emergence of meaning solely within the mind. Such perspectives are biased towards signs that are associated with consciousness such that "the interpretive acts of a mental agent or mindful being are …supposed … to constitute the sole source of significance (Colapietro 2006: 25). An individualistic process is supposed whereby the interpreter perceives the external world and develops a subjective understanding, which is

inherently unique and relative. Rather than something independently existent, the sign is an unstable aspect of mental processes.

In contrast, Peirce proposes that symbols possess their own vitality and that the mind itself is an emergent process of sign use and creation (Peirce 1958: 71). This directs the focus away from discovering what lay behind the sign and towards the functioning of symbols. Peirce's general theory of signs attempts to clarify this functioning so as to better specify the concepts used within inquiry. A full discussion of Peirce's contribution would take us too far afield. The key point is that semiosis is a continual process that binds together chains of objects, signs, and interpretants (Colapietro 2006). For example if a baby cries, the occurring sound is a sign that something is wrong. The interpretant is not whoever hears the cry but the response to the sound, which itself serves as sign (e.g. of comfort or safety) thereby continuing a ceaseless process of semiosis. The crying child is the object, which can be considered in both its immediate and dynamic aspects. The immediate object of the crying child is how it is represented by a sign or series of signs whereas the dynamical object is the child as determining the series of signs. As a dynamical object, the child "has the capacity to constrain a process of representation and, thus, to enable the recognition of misinterpretation" (Colapietro 2006: 26). Such recognition would occur at the level of interpretant as a response rather than through the mental cognition of the interpreting agent.

Whether general or particular, our concepts are not real simply because we think them. Rather, ideas must be referred back to experience and judged based upon the practical consequences of having thought so and not otherwise. However, these judgments are always potentially fallible. There are at least two sources of error that may impact determinations of "the real." The impossibility of immediate experience implies that there is always the possibility of

misinterpreting signs of the external world. "All human thought and opinion contains an arbitrary, accidental element, dependent on the limitations in circumstances, power and bent of the individual; an element of error, in short" (Peirce 1958: 81). Even granting the perfection of intellect, the temporal and dynamic nature of experience suggests that changes within the environment might always demand that we modify our expectations.

There is an affinity between the views of Weber and Peirce on this point. In "Issues of Pragmaticism", Peirce asserts "when we say that we know that some state of things exits, we mean that it used to exist" (1958: 221-222). Similarly, Weber notes that our ideas always reference "an ever changing finite segment of ...events, which flows away through time" (1949a: 111). Interestingly, this leads both to establish truth as an ideal. Yet while Weber settles upon a notion of truth consisting of "concepts and judgments, which are neither empirical reality nor reproduction of it" (1949a: 111), Peirce holds truth out as a very real and possible definite form to which "human opinion universally tends in the long run" (1958: 81). Here, the key difference between them can be traced to alternative starting points in the conceptualization of empirically valid knowledge. Weber starts with the neo-Kantian theory of concept formation. However, Peirce looks to empirical manifestations of knowledge to see what it may suggest about itself.

Peirce begins by looking at "knowing" as it is experienced within everyday life.[8] This leads to a rejection of the traditional conceptualization of "knowing" as a purely cognitive and rational state for more realistic and embodied notions of doubt and belief. Simple observation will show that conscious reflection upon the validity of "facts" takes up a very small portion of ordinary activity. Normally, individuals encounter the world with a commonsense understanding

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[8] See "The Fixation of Belief" (Peirce 1958: 91-112).

that guides action. We do not go about in a state of absolute doubt and then proceed to reason about what is real. Rather, belief is the natural state by which our actions proceed more or less seamlessly with conscious (and unconscious) evaluations of the environment in relation to our wants and needs. Belief "is of the nature of a habit" that is only interrupted when something causes us to doubt the criteria guiding our normal patterns of decision-making (Peirce 1958: 99, 101). Doubt is visceral and produces an irritation, which "causes a struggle to attain a state of belief" (Peirce 1958: 99). For Peirce, inquiry begins with the struggle to move from doubt to belief and ends with the settlement of opinion (Peirce 1958: 101). Yet, the settling of opinion may take many forms. We might hold tenaciously to our beliefs, refer to authority or rely upon certain first principles (i.e. a priori assumptions). However, these methods fail to "present(s) any distinction of a right and a wrong way," which is necessary to resolve conflict of opinion (Peirce 1958: 109). As social creatures, we need a communal method of fixing belief open to self-criticism and self-correction (Colapietro 2006: 22). Peirce identifies such a manner of inquiry with "the method of science," which he understands as a communal process whereby we encounter the external as mediated by signs and come to a consensus regarding what reality holds (Peirce 1958: 109). However, this essentially amounts to the fixation of provisional beliefs, which when confronted with changing circumstances are always at risk of error.

Pragmatism offers an epistemology best described as optimistic fallibilism where knowledge proceeds in infinite states of progress and regress typified by the commonsense notion of trial and error. In contrast to the accumulation of facts, the pragmatist notion of inquiry aims toward improving the chances that the experimental and externally oriented investigation of a community of inquirers leads to the improvement of intelligence. This replaces the metaphysical idea of "getting the mind independent world right" with local aims of inquiry (e.g.

adequacy, coherence, simplicity, understanding), which in the end are oriented towards the adaptation of conduct to better meet wants and needs. Pragmatism's emphasis on action bears some similarity to Weber's own concern for the meaning of social action. For both, the focus upon action leads to recognition of the role of evaluation in perception and concept formation. However, Weber maintains that the values guiding the development and application of concepts are categorically separate from the facts, which may be ascertained by the use of such concepts. A pragmatist would hold that this is a matter of distinction not difference. To illustrate, we turn to the work of John Dewey who explicitly addresses the fact/value dualism.

Like Peirce, Dewey adopts a naturalistic concept of experience and meaning that looks beyond the mind and into action. Experience pertains to "the intercourse of a living being with its physical and social environment" and is not strictly a "knowledge-affair" (Dewey [1917]1998: 47). In contrast to something purely subjective, "what experience suggests about itself is a genuinely objective world which enters into the actions and sufferings of men and undergoes modifications through their response" (Dewey [1917]1998: 48). Similarly, "meanings are objective because they are modes of natural interaction" (Dewey [1925] 1958: 190). Mediated experience in this context refers to a continual process of interaction rather than arbitrary mental states. The nominalist account of language and concepts is rejected and the reality of the concept is founded upon social action.

"A word …does not become a word by declaring a mental existence; it
becomes a word by gaining meaning; and it gains meaning when its use establishes a
genuine community of action. Interaction, operative relationship, is as much a fact
about events as are particularity and immediacy." (Dewey [1925] 1958: 185)

If we remain completely faithful to reality as experienced, we find that "what is" manifests as relational processes. Within the world of human action, such relations presuppose an active and intelligent being capable (at least to some degree) of directing the course of events so as to increase the chances that conditions will meet their wants and needs. From this angle, the relation between fact and value leads easily into a discussion of means and ends. However to deconstruct the dualism between fact and value, it is necessary to go beyond means and ends to consider ends-in-view. Dewey recognizes that "the distinction between ends and means is temporal and relational" and therefore rejects ends-in-themselves entirely (Dewey [1939] 1984: 229). Social action is better described as a continuum of means and ends, which fold into one another throughout the course of events.

Transposing fact and value on to the language of means and ends, we find certain actions to result in desirable or undesirable results. All human action occurs within a context of belief (either implicit or explicit) about means and ends, which interactively shape ends-in-view. This is to say that desire, decision and action are all embedded within beliefs about what means and ends are possible. Individuals are constantly engaged in an assessment of the conditions of their environment, looking towards future action, and evaluating what is and what could be. This process ensures that fact/value and means/ends are inextricably linked. What is more, it occurs fully in time, history and culture. Therefore, the realities of fact and value flow in connection with historical and cultural patterns of desire, action and belief. The ever-changing flux obtains a measure of stability from these patterns as they guide reconfigurations and discovery.

The deconstruction of the fact/value and means/ends dichotomies does not necessarily mean the unification of the "Is" and the "Ought." The natural fallacy remains but with a recognition that values, morality and ethics are all existent realities. Moral values are distinct

forms of cultural values that cannot be innocently subsumed under the sciences. Nevertheless, science cannot remain fully outside the realm of values. Both the cultural and the natural sciences have a particular power to influence our perception of what is and what could be. As such, social researchers must recognize and consider both personal and social means, ends, and ends-in-view. While some measure of professional distance and value-neutrality are essential to the task of empirical science, points-of-view and methods connect with the realities of culture and history and as such are suffused with value. As an example, we might look to the notion of freedom as a paradigm case illustrating what the entanglement of fact and value means in particular for the social sciences.

The Entanglement Fact and Value in the Notion of Freedom

Human freedom and the conditions for its existence (or non-existence) have been central themes within sociology since the founding of the discipline. Confronted with an era of rapid social change, classical sociologists sought to understand both the dangers and promises of modernity for individual liberty. Weber's interest in the growth of bureaucracy, the alarm of Marx over the inequities of capitalism, and the focus on social order and control in Durkheim each reflect an underlying motivation to understand changing conditions of human freedom (Marske 1981; Palonen 1999). While classical sociologists explicitly considered the constraint and expansion of individuality in relation to new forms of social organization, they focused upon the study of "social facts" leaving questions about the meaning of freedom to political theory and philosophy. Nonetheless for classical sociologists, the distinction between empirical research and philosophical inquiry was relatively porous in contrast to the sharp divide between mainstream sociology and philosophy today (Calhoun 1991).[9] Early affinities stand quite diminished as highly quantitative and technical research frames modeled after the natural sciences have come to dominate the field. The prevailing scientific model within sociology, whether in empiricist or positivist guise, claims to possess realism based upon objective facts that supposedly stand in stark contrast to normative theories of value.

The notion of freedom in itself is rather ambiguous and extremely value-laden. In questioning what freedom is or what it means, one encounters a wide range of notions, which

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[9] The early permeability of disciplinary boundaries is expressed quite clearly by Max Weber in his essay, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." In this piece, Weber outlines his approach to social science in relation to his role as editor of the German publication *Archiv*. In reference to "a science of cultural life" he states: "the rational understanding of [the] "ideals" for which men either really or allegedly struggle" is "among the tasks of social philosophy. However, the historical influence of ideals in the development of social life has been and still is so great that our journal cannot renounce this task." (Weber 1949a: 54).

either explicitly or implicitly incorporate a particular normative stance. Political freedom calls to mind democratic governance and civic participation. Religious freedom implies a separation of church and state. Personal freedom evokes images of individuals following their own life goals without interference. These are illustrations that would be acceptable to most Westerners as representations of freedoms that are "good" and "just". Yet, we can easily call to mind other examples that are not "good". Consider the many leftists who protest vehemently against market liberalization or the parent of a teenager who is certain the most dangerous thing in adolescence is too much freedom.

Variation in meaning and valuation has lead many sociologists to study freedom as a cultural value, focusing upon subjective interpretations. However, freedom (or unfreedom) also exists as an objective reality. The "social facts" of poverty, imprisonment, and disenfranchisement are examples; ones that while often topics of sociological inquiry are rarely made explicit in terms of freedom. There are social scientists that have approached freedom as an objective entity with standard quantitative methods (Inglehart, Foa, Peterson, et al. 2008; Naito 2007). However, these studies tend to provide very thin explications of the particular notion of freedom at play. The lack of rich conceptualization minimizes the appearance of normative presuppositions. However, it hardly does away with them. Any approach to the world, even the rationally scientific, operates within a web of experience informed by presuppositions that represent what we have no cause to question. These assumptions exhibit fusions of fact and value, which are relatively stable in comparison to the integrations occurring within fields of doubt. In speaking of a fact/value entanglement, I refer to these integrations and fusions constituting processes of knowing.

Human freedom cannot escape the normative realm but neither can it be reduced to a cultural value. Experiences of freedom and constraint attest to their objective reality. Yet, what freedom or constraint mean objectively remains unclear when we refer merely to the concepts themselves, which are highly abstract and generalizable to many situations. In over two thousand years, Western philosophy has failed to produce an unproblematic account of freedom. This should not be misconstrued simply as a failure of philosophy. In some way, it reflects the nature of the discipline's primary resource, language, which when seen as a process of social discourse rather than an expression of antecedent thought acquires a dynamic quality evident in all behavior (Dewey [1925] 1958: 179). From this perspective, it is ill advised to expect philosophy to settle on a meaning of freedom. If meaning does not communicate some fixed essence or form but emerges as humans collectively sense and signify what has been had in experience (Dewey [1925] 1958: 261), freedom remains by its very nature a subject of permanent discourse. Forms of social relations will continually be questioned in light of changing cultural and material realties. The failure of philosophy has been to focus on a rational discourse that obscures the social conditions underlying debates over meaning and value. No matter how sophisticated, dialectical arguments float above reality when they begin and end in the abstract. Realistically, our theories make valid claims only in so far as they relate back and effectively inform practical experience (Dewey [1925] 1958: 4), for it is in experience that the consequences of ideas are enjoyed or suffered by real individuals. Seen in this light, freedom or constraint has significance only in reference to concrete forms of social action and organization (Mannheim 1951: 275). Therefore the question of liberty calls for a sociological approach fully embedded within history and culture that considers freedom both in terms of objective conditions and normative value.

Understood semiotically, the existence of freedom is objectively real. The idea of its possibility or loss has practical consequences. Any number of revolutions since the 18th century can attest to its influence upon individual action. Yet when speaking of freedom as existent, we refer to more than an abstract notion objectified through human intellect. We speak not of a thing at all but of particular conditions that describe certain concrete social relations within cultural and historical contexts. As a state of relations, the concept is dynamically and actively involved in social processes, which give rise to material conditions. Yet, the particular interrelations involved in conditions of freedom (or unfreedom) vary based upon what specifically is in question. A disenfranchised voter rightly looks first to the political process while an imprisoned felon the criminal justice system. Similar factors may be implicated in each situation say for example if we speak of two African-Americans in the Jim Crow South. But this is not necessarily the case. The fact that a plurality of "freedoms" exists presents a challenge to theories seeking a unified concept. Is there some commonality across particular situations that validate generalization? For even though we can only speak of an idea's truth though reference to concrete experience, what significance do concepts have when applied so broadly as to describe almost anything? The indeterminacy of freedom as a general concept demands that sociological investigations look towards the intersection of fact and value within interpretations of freedom across different historical, social, and cultural contexts. Such an approach may deepen our understanding of "what freedom is" and "why it is (or is not) valued" within the concrete realities of the present day.

Empirical research on the realities of freedom (or unfreedom) enters directly into the entanglement of fact and value because the notion is in essence an estimate of the conditions of potential action, which entails some value judgment regarding ends-in-view and actual

consequences. The operationalization of criteria will be influenced both by what generally "counts" within the community inquirers and by the unique insight of the researcher. Within any community, the evaluation of concrete relations in terms of what is generally held to be "possible" or "valuable" necessary reflects the variation of a complex world inhabited by complex creatures. Perfect agreement is neither possible nor desirable. Yet, this should not stop the cultural sciences from exploring the empirical reality of the causes, consequences and future possibilities of existent facts/values and means/ends.

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