

## EDITORIAL

### SCIENCE AS POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS<sup>1</sup>: FACT AND ANALYSIS IN AN ETHICAL WORLD

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*Editor*

*An Editorial invitation from Behavior & Philosophy for submissions on the relation between objective and subjective, fact and value, belief and reality, in contemporary psychology.*

“We are all engaged in writing a kind of propaganda. . . . Rather than believe in the absolute truth of what we are writing, we must believe in the moral or political positions we are taking with it.” So wrote a couple of University of Pennsylvania instructors in the *Journal of Social History*, quoted by columnist John Leo. I recall my sometime colleague Stanley Fish saying (with the air of reciting the obvious) “all teaching is seduction.” While many scientists might quarrel with these two statements, relatively few would dispute this recent comment in *Science*: “[In 1976] biomedical science—indeed science in general—labored under a belief that scientific activity was value-free and ethics free. The view that science does not make ethical judgments was so pervasive that it essentially served as an ideological basis for scientific activity . . . ” (Rollin<sup>2</sup> & Loew, 2001, p. 1831). The implication, presumably, is that science *does*, or perhaps *should*, make ethical judgments; that it is not, or *cannot be*, value-free.

Contrast this position with “Nature consists of facts and regularities, and is in itself neither moral nor immoral,” which is Karl Popper in 1950 (p. 62) stating what to him and his contemporaries was obvious. But now, in the social sciences, and perhaps also in some so-called “hard” sciences like biomedicine, understanding nature is taking a back seat to ideology. Moreover, this is regarded by many as both laudable and inevitable.

Even the psychological establishment seems to be aware that there is some sort of problem. The March 2001 issue of the *American Psychologist* contained an article by Richard Redding that looked at the political/ideological affiliation of psychologists. He found considerable uniformity: Liberals rule. Redding’s solution was to call for greater political diversity in the field. Such a call will certainly go unheeded—and so it should, for what business does the APA or any other

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<sup>1</sup> The allusion is to Karl von Clausewitz’s famous comment in *On War* that “War is only a continuation of state policy by other means.”

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scientific (not to mention tax-exempt!) organization have seeking to influence the politics of its members?

But Redding is right that there is a problem, albeit not one of expressed political affiliations. It also can be illustrated from the pages of the *American Psychologist*. The lead article in the February 2001 issue is entitled: “An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications” by Glick and Fiske. The theme of the article is that “The equation of prejudice with antipathy is challenged by recent research on sexism” (p. 109). Of course both “prejudice” and “sexism” are terms that depend for their pejorative force on an ideology, a set of *values*—values that are almost entirely unstated in the article. Not that the authors are unaware of the power of ideology. They are very critical of what they call “legitimizing ideologies”—Rudyard Kipling’s “white man’s burden” takes quite a licking, for example. But their own ideology is to them as water to the fish: invisible.

Here is a partial list of the values that seem to be taken for granted by these authors:

1. Equality is the most important value and trumps all others. “Equality” (between the sexes, for example) is not defined but seems to amount to “identity.” Only if men and women are treated in exactly the same way in every situation can they be regarded as truly equal: “gender differentiation create[s] and reinforces[s] hostile sexism” (p. 112).
2. “Power” is important, but there is good power and bad power. “Good power” is the power associated with professional status and money. “Bad power” is the power associated with good looks, charm and sexual attractiveness. “Simply put, men typically rule, dominating the highest status roles” (p. 110) but “Benevolent sexism is disarming” (p 111) and “men often resent women’s perceived ability to use sexual attractiveness to gain power over them” (p. 112).
3. Stereotyping (not defined) is bad.
4. A professional career is better than being a housewife: “women who implicitly associated male romantic partners with chivalrous images . . . had less ambitious career goals, presumably because they were counting on a future husband for economic support” (p. 111).
5. Sexual reproduction is problematic: “male-female relations are conditioned by sexual reproduction, a biological constant that creates dependencies and intimacy between the sexes . . . patriarchy, gender differentiation and sexual reproduction . . . create both hostile and benevolent attitudes toward the other sex” (pp. 111-112).
6. Patriarchy (not defined) is bad.
7. Intellectual elitism: Some beliefs (mine) should be respected, others (yours) are “false consciousness,” cf. “The role of stereotyping in system-justification and the production of false-consciousness,” a paper by Jost and Banaji cited with approval by the authors.

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Some readers may be puzzled by this list, since these so-called “values” are surely self-evident. Who could be against equality, for gender roles, against lofty career goals, and so on? But that is not the point. The point is that these claims are not scientific facts, nor will they seem self-evident to many cultures other than our own—or indeed to many subcultures within the United States.

What then is the solution? Well, it has long been a convention in experimental work to separate factual matter, the data, from analysis. Data appear in the *Results* section; all else is reserved to the *Discussion*. And value judgements are usually excluded altogether. I see no reason why these rules should not be universally required in science. Thus, value-laden statements should either be excluded from the research entirely or (lest we abolish much of social psychology) stated in a responsible way. For example, “If you believe that women should have exactly the same social role as men, then our research shows that following things favor that objective and these other things hinder it” . . . and so on. First the value-dependent premises, then the data—or the reverse. The point is to separate facts and assumptions. It seems pretty obvious that a conscientious effort to differentiate what is fact from what is value is essential if social-science psychology is to rise above the level of “politics by other means.”

*But not everyone will agree.* Some may have other solutions; others may think that fact and value cannot be separated; still others may wish to defend the current trend. But I hope you will agree that the issue is an especially important one for students of behavior. I therefore invite submissions for a Special Issue of *Behavior & Philosophy* on Fact and Value in Contemporary Psychology. There is no firm deadline for the receipt of submissions, but we expect the issue to be closed by June 1, 2002.

## References

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- Popper, K. (1950) *The open society and its enemies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
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- Rollin, B. E., & Loew, F. M. (2001). Assessing the reviewers of animal research. *Science, 294*, 1831.

## Submission Instructions

Papers can be submitted as email attachments (preferably in Microsoft WORD) to The Editor, at [Staddon@psych.duke.edu](mailto:Staddon@psych.duke.edu). For other publication information, see The Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies website: [www.behavior.org](http://www.behavior.org) → Publications → Behavior *and* Philosophy.