

May 13, 2002

LEVEL: 11

[Chapter 6]

## *Some Problems of Circular Reasoning in Social Science*

[URL: CircularReasoning]

SECTIONS (& perhaps subsections):

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“Mainstream economics, in its positivistic and instrumental orientation, pretends to be principally concerned with discovering regularities and correlations within the economic order which might permit greater prediction and control of economic phenomena. However, its uncritical stance, combined with its pretense of ethical neutrality, has precluded attempts to differentiate those regularities and correlations representing invariant forms of social life from those which merely ‘express ideologically frozen relations of dependence that in principle can be transformed’ (Habermas 1971). Regularities which represent the ideological imprisonment of humans make predictions of social phenomena more likely. Indeed, the more firmly ideology is entrenched, the greater will be the predictive power. Such predictions can become powerful instruments for control and manipulation of society by the state or private centres of concentrated power.”

— Jon D. Wisman (1991)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>From “The Scope and Goals of Economic Science: A Habermasian Perspective”. In Donald Lavoie, ed. (1991:113-133). *Economics and Hermeneutics*. New York: Routledge. Passed along by Rakesh Bhandari <djones@uclink.berkeley.edu> to the Habermas elist.

## **I The Problem**

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## **II Its Origin in Hermetic Projects**

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### **A. The logical structure of an hermetic project**

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### **B. The sociological structure of an hermetic project**

... and so it generally supports the ruling form of life, and is supported by people who benefit from that form of life.

## **III The Treatment of Explanatory Error**

The treatment of residual (“error”) variance as error or chaos instead of an insight into new meaning. Error can be dismissed, but if that represents the growing, transformative edge, then we miss everything. *Residual* variance is more than simply *error* variance.

## **IV Some Examples**

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### **A. “Human nature”**

Notice the concrete example of my participation in the psych experiment at Rutgers, where my case was excluded because I didn’t respond within the framework the experimenter anticipated.

Notice how people are unused to seeing anything but hostility in the face of disagreement (the “adversarial assumption”; the emphasis on winners & losers; the sports images generally), so the second-order criteria appear strange.

### **B. “Intelligence” and “Survival of the Fittest”**

[xx Take this from my paper, “Heritable Intelligence”.]

### **C. The “Failure” of Socialism**

We do everything we can to destroy Cuba and the USSR, and then crow that “socialism doesn’t work”.

### **D. The “Mental Illness” of Queers**

We demonize gays, drive them into the closet, and then point to their consequent behavior as proving being gay is wrong. After all, did you have an easy time reaching emotional maturity

around sex?<sup>2</sup> Now imagine going through the same process, except with everyone saying you're bad and/or with the fear of being attacked (emotionally or physically) and/or without being able to talk with anyone, even your peers.

### **V Dialectical vs. Inductive/Deductive Logic**

Solution to this reasoning to look at it dialectically?

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<sup>2</sup>I know I didn't. Forty years after puberty, I'm still not sure my emotions around sex are mature.