The Evolutionary Manifesto

We--Bernard Phillips and David Christner--two of the founding members of the Sociological Imagination Group, are committed to the integration of existing knowledge of human behavior and its application to world-wide problems.

Problems

1. We are convinced that problems throughout the world are accelerating, and that they are beginning to threaten the very survival of the human race. We see the 20th century as by far the bloodiest century in history, with its wars and deliberate murder of millions of civilians yielding the slaughter of more people than in all previous wars. And we are aware of no systematic direction within any nation for either understanding the nature of these problems or confronting them effectively, granting partial successes. Yet we are also aware of the infinite potential of every single human being. This is a time neither for unrealistic pessimism nor for unrealistic optimism, but rather for a realistic understanding of our complex and threatening problems and our potential for confronting them effectively.

2. We see the most threatening world problems as (1) war with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction as well as violence by groups with ordinary weapons, (2) starvation, poverty and the growing worldwide gap between the rich and the poor, (3) education--both formal and through the mass media--at all levels and in all nations, which fails to prepare the individual for learning how to solve problems, (4) health problems such as pandemics in much of the world, and (5) ecological problems such as global warming, pollution and the destruction of the environment. These problems along with others interact with one another, The result is that the problems on our planet are exceedingly complex, involving physical, biological, personality and social structure**s** that interact with one another in any and every situation.

3. We believe that these world problems are linked to the failures of physical, biological and social scientists to integrate all available knowledge bearing on them so as to develop the understanding required to solve them. We see the human situation at this time in history through the eyes of the poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay:

> Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour
> Rains from the sky, a meteoric shower
> Of facts. . . .
> They lie unquestioned, uncombined.
> Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill
> Is daily spun, but there exists no loom
> To weave it into fabric.

General Directions for Solutions

4. We see our situation as similar to that of the passengers flying United 93 on 9/11 during the same morning that planes crashed into New York City's Twin Towers and Washington DC's Pentagon, killing almost 3000 people. We too are flying through space--on the planet Earth--on a suicide mission pointing us all toward disaster. United 93 was delayed, and some of the passengers learned about the disaster at the World Trade Center. Although we don't know exactly what happened as a result, we do know that someone said "Let's roll," and instead of that plane crashing into the White House or the Capitol building it crashed into a Pennsylvania field. We, too, can parallel that "Let's roll" commitment and act decisively to confront our problems before it is too late.

5. Yet human behavior is far more complex than physical and biological phenomena. Back in 1711 the English poet Alexander Pope wrote, "A little learning is a dangerous thing." The vast accomplishments of those scientists and technologists in shaping our world over the past five centuries were based on "little learning," avoiding human behavior along with human complexity. Their one-sided learning is a fundamental basis for the dangerous world we live in, yielding the AK-47 that schoolchildren can turn on their classmates and the nuclear bombs that can rain down on our cities. But that "little learning" has failed to yield the understanding that would prevent such weapons from being produced or employed.

6. Given that failure of biophysical scientists and technologists, it remained for the new social scientists of the 19th and 20th centuries to begin to apply the scientific method to human behavior, creating bodies of knowledge within the disciplines of sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science and history. Yet their progress in developing understanding of human behavior and human problems was limited by their emphasis on specialization with few bridges connecting the different social sciences, and even few bridges connecting specialties within each of the social sciences. For example, within the American Sociological Association there are no less than 44 distinct Sections with little communication across those Sections. Yet knowledge from all of these Sections, and much more, is essential for addressing effectively the complexities within any given human situation.

7. It remained for C. Wright Mills to develop a general direction for integrating knowledge of human behavior that was broad enough to address human complexity and confront fundamental social problems in his 1959 book, *The Sociological Imagination*, voted by the members of the International Sociological Association as the second most influential book among sociologists over the entire 20th century:

> The sociological imagination. . . .is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another--from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of an oil industry to studies of

> contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self--and to see the relations between the two.

8. In 2000 the Sociological Imagination Group was formed in an effort to use Mills' ideas about the scientific method as a direction for integrating social science knowledge, as outlined in *Beyond Sociology's Tower of Babel: Reconstructing the Scientific Method* (Phillips, 2001). This required a systematic approach to the language of the social sciences coupled with the knowledge accumulated throughout those sciences. That approach is illustrated in ordinary speech by seeing the relationship between general concepts and specific concepts--such as "flower" and "rose." By moving back and forth between general and specific concepts, we add to our knowledge of any given flower by invoking our knowledge of other flowers.

9. In the same way, we can move back and forth from general social science concepts to the specific concepts within any given social science or within any subfield within a social science. To illustrate, there is no concept more central to the discipline of sociology than "social stratification" or persisting hierarchy. Its importance is illustrated by the vital role of persisting patterns of hierarchy in work settings that limit opportunities for workers to be treated as worthwhile human beings. Such patterns of social stratification are also illustrated by sexism, nationalism, racism, ethnocentrism, religious prejudice and classism, all of which set up persisting hierarchies. Yet although specialists within sociology have developed knowledge of each of these patterns of stratification, their lack of emphasizing the general concept of stratification has prevented them from developing deeper understanding of the complexities within any given pattern of hierarchy or social stratification.

10. Over the past seven years the Sociological Imagination Group has held annual conferences linked to the meetings of the American Sociological Association, committed to a far more inclusive approach to the scientific method than that used throughout the social and biophysical sciences. We call it "the Web and Part/Whole Approach" so as to refer to the web of concepts required to gain insight into human behavior, including both large-scale and long-term phenomena as well as momentary and concrete occurrences within any given scene. In the spirit of Mills, that approach opens up to the contributions of all of the sciences and their technologies, the humanities, the fundamental assumptions examined by philosophy, and Eastern no less than Western thought. Our publications include--in addition to *Beyond Sociology's Tower of Babel*--the edited volume *Toward A Sociological Imagination* (2002), *The Invisible Crisis of Contemporary Society* (February 2007), and the edited volume *Understanding Terrorism:* (March 2007). We do not claim to have hit upon the solution to any social problem. But we do claim to have opened up a path toward integrating the scattered pieces of knowledge in our libraries so that they can be put to work in confronting accelerating problems of our world that are beginning to threaten our very survival. Our work is based on that of a great many individuals in addition to Mills, especially Charles Peirce, Thomas Kuhn, Alvin W. Gouldner, Harold Kincaid and Thomas J. Scheff. Our focus is on learning to use the scientific method in everyday life by professional scientists no less than all others.

Recommendations

Deep Democracy: We see a broad approach to the scientific method as yielding the basis for a long-range goal of a much deeper form of democracy than has yet been achieved anywhere on the globe. It was Jane Addams who claimed in her *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902) that "The cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy." Those ills, as illustrated by widespread patterns of social stratification which point far away from egalitarian ideals, are evident in the United States and Western Europe as well as in other nations. Our first recommendation, then, is that a long-range goal for all peoples should be the continuing extension of democracy far beyond political processes and into the everyday behavior of individuals and groups. During the 1960s the "countercultural" movements in the United States pointed toward the achievement of more equality throughout society without emphasizing the importance of gaining further understanding of human behavior by building on the achievements of the academic world. We believe that they failed to achieve their aims largely as a result.

To begin to spell out just what "deep democracy" means to us, we might parallel the speech that Martin Luther King gave at the Civil Rights March in Washington on August 28th, 1963: "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." We have a dream that:

> there will be a future for our children, our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren.
>
> one day we will all learn see ourselves as children who are only just beginning to understand ourselves and our world, and we will also learn to dream about our infinite possibilities and move toward those visions one step at a time.
>
> one day we will all learn to pay close attention to the accomplishments of all peoples throughout history as well as to our own personal accomplishments, and we will also learn to pay close attention to the failures of the human race and to our own personal failures.
>
> one day we will be able to bring to the surface and reduce our stratified emotions like fear, shame, guilt, hate, envy and greed, and we will learn to express ever more our evolutionary emotions like confidence, enthusiasm, happiness, joy, love and empathy.
>
> one day we will see peace on earth and fellowship among all humans.
>
> one day we will no longer look down on any other human being.
>
> one day we all will learn to be poets, philosophers and scientists.

The Scientific Method in Everyday Life: If the scientific method is to help all of us move toward deep democracy, then we should all have as a fundamental goal our movement toward learning to use a broad approach to the scientific method in our own everyday lives. We recommend, then, that using a very broad approach to the scientific method in our everyday lives should be a priority for us that is no less fundamental than our making the development of deep democracy a priority.

We are all in different situations, and as a result different individuals will work in different ways if they follow this recommendation. For example, a political leader might wish to emphasize legislation that would fund social scientists to work toward the integration of their knowledge. Some might choose to read social science publications. Others might begin to focus on examining their own lives. People working with mass media might attempt to develop films or novels which illustrate or carry further the above ideas. Those deeply involved with computers might choose to explore how individuals can learn to integrate the vast bodies of knowledge presently available on the internet. Social scientists and others might explore the ideas of the Sociological Imagination Group--perhaps beginning with their website <www.uab.edu/philosophy/sig> (to be updated) or participating in its annual conferences or corresponding with us--in order to develop further or challenge those ideas. Journalists working in print or on television may choose to write about these ideas of deep democracy and the scientific method in everyday life. Physicians may explore the possible impact of these ideas on the health of the individual. Attorneys might examine the potential of these ideas for improving the effectiveness of legal systems as well as their personal effectiveness in their practices.

Economic development is of particular importance, given the problems of starvation, poverty and the growing gap between the rich and the poor throughout the world. Employers, teachers, psychotherapists and social workers might develop ever more effective procedures by learning to apply the vast knowledge located throughout the social sciences to their own situations. By so doing they might move away from stratified relationships with their employees, students or clients--such as initiating more egalitarian wages--and thus motivate them to contribute their own personal knowledge and commitment to the success of problem-solving efforts. Further, they might help their employees, students or clients to undergo the same learning process--learning to apply social science knowledge to solve problems--that they themselves are experiencing. And that in turn could yield increasing effectiveness throughout the economic world coupled with a reduction of starvation, poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor. Although this may appear to be a naive dream, a broad scientific method that is used in everyday life has never been tried throughout history, and--based on the research cited above--we are convinced of its potential for yielding economic development.

We see our work as no more than opening a door to a direction which is both old and new. It builds on a great many ideas, Eastern as well as Western, as illustrated by many of the ideas of Gandhi. Yet it is indeed an approach which integrates all of those ideas in a way that has never been done before. Overall, it opens up to the potential of each one of us to continue to develop his or her ability to understand self and world, to express emotions, and to solve problems with no limit whatsoever.