Retrieving Aristotle: The Journeyman Calling of the Sociologist

-by James R. Kelly

More than previous eras we now explicitly know that biography powerfully affects thought, including the most rarefied and self-critical thought of intellectuals. But there are different ways of dealing with this acknowledgment, one leading to a kind of postmodern indulgence of subjectivity and the other to a renewed sense of responsibility for integrating our lives for the sake of truth. For scholarly workers, truth is our first commitment and we must be willing to rearrange our lives, our practices and our disciplinary allegiances when truth requires it. So any serious concern with biography and intellectual work in social science must aim at a deepening commitment to truth and the realization of human solidarity.

Another preliminary point needs raising. Scholars live busy lives. Why, besides our democratic inclinations, might we have a passing interest in a biographical reflections of even a sociological journeyman's pilgrimage toward truth? In sociology, I think journeymen scholarly workers make the best truth seekers and finders. In a 1970 work he charmingly entitled Reflections On The Causes of Human Misery And Upon Certain Proposals To Eliminate Them, Barrington Moore refreshingly (and honestly) wrote, "I have not sought novelty or originality, qualities that at least in the study of human affairs seem rather overvalued. Nor do I flatter myself that my personal opinions have any significance as such." (xv)

Not everyone would pick journeyman to describe an aspiration. I consider journeyman an honorable--more importantly, in social science the most truthful--designation, and one that conveys great responsibility for craft and integrity. (I'm pleased to note that in the OED records as early as 1730 there already was available the companion term journeywoman.) A journeyman is the opposite of a "hack." A "hack" in any field is a self-promoter packaging and selling whatever goods he has come to possess, including intellectual goods. The journeyman is the opposite. The journeyman carries a lifelong appreciation for the way of life that slowly nurtured his skills of mind and heart. And, like all else, this begins in early childhood. Unlike both hack and apprentice, a journeyman requires creativity. As Monika K. Hellwig nicely observed, in time "A person must choose by whom, by what traditions and expectations, by which codes and criteria to be guided, and, similarly, whose
expectations and which pressures to resist. These norms are by no means simple or self-evident in practice, but call for continuous shrewd assessments based on clarity of purpose and a degree of personal detachment.  

Becoming a *journeyman* in sociology involves more than the skills of a discipline; it involves a way of life that opens the heart, and keeps it open despite the constant temptation to cynicism, to a tradition of justice. An adjective that should never precede *journeyman* is "mere." I prefer the term *journeyman* to both "intellectual" and "professional," both of which often suggest an individualistic--indeed, egoistic-- rather than a communal focus for life and thought. Authentic truth has both communal roots and communal aspirations. The *journeyman* sociologist understands that when she or he pushes the analysis close to the bone of where questions of justice must be encountered, he will not invent but discover in his formative and still forming traditions the critical resources she or he imaginatively employs.

*If Not Biographical Companions, Then Fellow Pilgrims*

If there is one incontestable sociological premise it might well be "No one invents herself." Indeed, even the normative thought of inventing oneself relies on an elaborate *postmodern* philosophy. My thought is intertwined with categories of thought absorbed through a Roman Catholic way of life and filtered through spiritual emotions shaped by Roman Catholic rituals. They still are. Others will associate my limitations with this corporate identity. *Journeyman* that I am, I associate my Catholicism, rather, with all the more enlarged parts of my mind and spirit. In important ways my Catholic habits of mind and heart both brought me to sociology and then made me very critical of the sociology I found. My Catholic trained sensibilities, especially when jarred, press me towards career stalling but deepening thoughts about the meaning of objectivity, the relationship of intellect to life, of life to intellect, and the place of sociology. Many have remarked about an *integralist* tendency in Catholic formed sensibilities and so my remarks embrace teaching and service and personal growth as well as scholarship and published research. I can at least hope that parts of my story fit some parts of those of other sociological *journeymen and women*. On a religious organization continuum, Catholicism appears at the end opposite to "sectarian." Needless to say, empirically this is not always the case. There are more than a few Catholic versions of triumphal sectarianism. Catholicism evolves, and so the *journeyman* embedded in its thought and worship will try to evolve as well. My Catholicism was importantly formed by the Second Vatican Council so, as good *journeyman*, my religious commitments must be ecumenical, interfaith and humanistic. I must see justice as constitutive of faith. If I am faithful, I must grow in solidarity and dialogue with all men and women, especially the poor. The first two sentences of the Council's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* quickly captured the direction of Roman Catholicism's evolution: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties
of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hope, the griefs and the anxieties of Catholics. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts." The Catholic journeyman is anxious to learn from journeymen and women from other traditions how to make his sociological practices contribute better to human solidarity.

On Remembering and Forgetting: The Long and Difficult Road From Apprentice to Journeyman

I did my apprenticeship at Harvard's Department of Social Relations from 1965 to 1969. I learned many interesting conceptual and methodological things there, of course. But here I concentrate only on the things I learned which, to advance from apprentice to journeyman, I had to unlearn. Among the most puzzling was why—remember this is 1965-1969—none of my sociology teachers mentioned the Vietnam War. This was more than a puzzle. It was an intellectual scandal. Ordinary men and women were much confused by the war. Sociology, I had naively thought, was about understanding the world and human behavior. Outside of class some of us were much preoccupied with the war—its meaning, the people we knew who were drafted, the protesters, and whether and in what appropriate ways we might join them—and it seemed intellectually fitting for people specializing in understanding society and the shaping of human behavior that at least in some class they apply a small portion of their expertise to comprehending the collective violence in Vietnam. It didn't happen.

Before graduate studies I thought I knew that making sense of important things was the root meaning and inspiration of the intellectual life and it made no sense to me that my prestigious teachers, at least in their classes, did not try to make sense of this extraordinary challenge to understanding. Whatever coherence—and courage—I achieved on these matters during this period of our history came from people associated with the peace movement, and especially fellow Catholics and most especially the sociologist Gordon Zahn. Zahn was an accomplished journeyman: he sought to apply sociological intelligence in ways that contributed to the intellectual and moral lives of others, especially his own tradition. He did this in dialogue with the social science that was available.

In 1967 I had reviewed his study of Franz Jagerstatter for Sociological Analysis. Jagerstatter was a peasant, an ordinary husband and father of three daughters who was executed weeks before the end of World War II because he refused to serve in Hitler's war. Zahn used the available social science of his day—reference group theory, anomie theory, studies in deviancy, etc.—to explore the historical and theological question of why so few German Catholics had opposed Hitler and his manifestly unjust war. Zahn was a Catholic and a pacifist and his permanently significant research stemmed from questions central to both his personal and professional identity. Zahn's
honesty, it seemed to this apprentice, led him to show both the moral failures of Catholicism and, indirectly, the moral shallowness of the sociology I was seeking to "master." The prestigious creators of mainstream sociology were not going as deeply or as bravely into the social causes of human behavior as the religiously committed journeyman Zahn. Why?

While Zahn's analysis were clearly rooted in his acknowledged commitments, my apprentice training seemed willfully designed to empty my head of all my previous non-sociological commitments. Indeed, on more than a few occasions I felt my Catholicism was treated as an impediment to objectivity rather than, as it clearly was for Zahn, as a motivation to fearlessly and dialogically raise without illusion the deepest questions about human behavior. Honesty for the sake of integrity is what is owed to any authentic and living tradition; raising the deepest and most serious questions is what is owed to any scholarly pursuit of truth. Conjoined as a truth-seeking integrity, both obligations--religious and intellectual--imply each other, and so the journeyman seeks proficiency in the complex intellectual-moral work of dialogue.

**Objectivity Mis-Defined As Value-Freedom**

Perhaps because I was a Jesuit seminarian at the time, in all my exams--especially the oral ones--I seemed always quizzed about Max Weber's *Science as a Vocation*. I had no trouble with Weberian answers on exams and even admired what then seemed to be his ungrounded courage; a stoic's commitment to objectivity even though, finally, there was none. This romantic (masculine?) nihilism could even, for a while, rival the mystic's search for an self-emptying grasp of the unknowable. I took Weber's stern injunction to abstain from all value judgments so to heart that it later made it nearly impossible for me to teach, although I found ways of filling the class hour with sociology sounds. But that journeyman's satisfied sense of gratitude and integrity constantly and painfully eluded me. I noticed the same unease among my peers, though at that time we lacked a rich enough vocabulary to express our inability to authentically experience Weber's calling as our own.²

Years later I faced up to the problem. You really can't write or speak or do anything with the mind unless you have a coherent and organizing point of view, something you wish to author because it's something you've brought together with an empirical eye and an alert conscience in a way that makes, for now, the best sense. It was time to leave the ranks of apprentice and assume the responsibilities of the journeyman. I found some helpful hints. The first duty of the writer, Strunk and White famously remind us, is to be clear. I think sociology's distance-producing abstraction reflexivity is simply an obscuring way to make the Strunk and White point. For reflexivity left out the moral dimension that makes for overall coherence of parts. You can't be clear for your students or for your reader if you have not achieved clarity for yourself. I'll say it here with a journeyman's plainness: there is no clarity without moral
clarity. Not, to be sure, dogmatic clarity but at least the provisional clarity (the point of Aristotle's *phronesis* or *prudence*, discussed later). By definition, the *journeyman*, unlike a *master*, is always on journey. A communal journey. In art and literature a single master can with great rarity produce an unsurpassable, incomparable work of creativity. But in the "real-world" journey toward human solidarity, only traditions contain and continue such exemplars. Even more, in the actual pursuit of human solidarity, there is no unsurpassable moment. Likewise, there is no last word in a dialogue. And so, there is no "last" challenge. This *journeyman* kind of moral clarity requires personal growth sought and achieved through dialogue so that, together, we might say something like, "As far as possible, and for now, these are the deepest human meanings we have achieved on these issues. This is what justice requires of society and of us."

As an apprentice I knew I needed some way of reaching my students at their center where intelligence and moral concern could stir each other to help them see that contributing to human solidarity was the final point of sociology. No sociology without justice; no justice without (the empirical data of) sociology. This was the dialogue we needed. There were some detours on my path from *apprentice* to *journeyman*, most notably one with John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, but at least now the path (though not the destination) was clear.

While on my Rawls' detour I could not help noticing that my puzzle about, as it was called, "the fact/value" distinction was widespread. By the mid 1980s in sociology there were literally thousands of published essays and books dealing with these *apprentice* type questions and I read as many as I could and even wrote a lengthy review of my findings. After this reading I realized I had to radically rethink what I had learned from my Harvard graduate masters about the meaning of sociological integrity. I had reached, though I had not read her at the time, the point drawn by Gertrud Lenzer in her still important *August Comte and Positivism: The Essential Writings* (NY: Harper Torchbook, 1975). Comte's positivism, which he envisioned as dethroning all previous approaches to knowledge, stifled the critical imagination and became, in effect, the false consciousness of contemporary social science: "Estranged from any real knowledge and understanding of the philosophical, historical, and political development of their disciplines, these new generations of social scientists were also largely unprepared to re-examine the foundations and meaning of their own undertakings. They took the disappearance of an entire dimension of consciousness to be precisely the sign of their membership in an advance guard that had finally freed itself from the fetters of a pre- or pseudo-or non-scientific past in which many of their contemporaries in other disciplines were still held captive. It was in this way that the allegedly new scientific spirit and praxis gained for itself proselytizing momentum as well." After reviewing the more subtle but still positivistic fragmented theories of the modern era, Lenzer straightforwardly announced "the end of the
positivist-empirical program." (xxi) There are new methodological
technologies, but there is no "new science of man." We are all journeywomen
now, although not all of us realize it. It makes a difference when we do.

I became a journeyman when I explicitly came to view sociology as a partner in dialogue—with students, with normative disciplines, with the wider public. But especially with Catholicism. That's the journeyman's honesty, once freed from "master's" illusions. On questions of social justice and peace I began incorporating the best I could find from the tradition of Catholic social thought. I knew this tradition best, and it was itself increasingly dialogic—with other world traditions, with social science. As for my students, I hoped to challenge them not by abstract methodological tactics but precisely in terms of their own deepest identities, however elusive they were (since they were still forming) and however questioning they were (as they ought to be). Of course, I aimed at all students, and not merely the Catholics who comprise Fordham's majority. I explained that Catholic social thought was not a catechism but a tradition of reasoned moral analysis on the crucial human issues of justice and personal integrity. What they read from these normative sources rose or fell with the reasoned arguments they found there. I made sure we never lost sight of the sociological integrity that requires empirical scrutiny even at the cost of cherished positions. For in sociology there are no permanently "cherished" positions; the only permanence aspired to by the journeyman sociologist is the empirical eye and the heart open to the claims of solidarity.

In class I refer to Troeltsch's earlier, still challenging, observation that, "with regard to the complicated social, political, and moral energies which it presupposes," sociology "cannot create ultimate values and standards from within," hence "is obliged to use institutions outside the borders of its own special faculty." I encourage them to use whatever they can from their own traditions to achieve the depth and width of analysis that I find prominently, but not exclusively, in the Roman Catholic tradition.

My dialogic approach must seem a small and obvious shift, probably close to what sensible journeymen and women already practiced. But it made a major difference in how I felt about integrity as a sociologist. And not just in class. It affected my research and publishing ideals. I found myself drawn to some very controversial issues—not merely issues of peace and justice that can always find some relatively comfortable landing place within the liberal polemical space—about which few (so it seemed to me) were making the best sense. For example, I tried to write dialogically about abortion and the consistent ethic of life as formulated by the late Cardinal Bernardin. I did my empirical work, to be sure, and reported it at conventions and in the journals. And then I tried to translate my work for readers of America, Commonweal, the Christian Century, letters to the Editor of the New York Times, etc.

More than scholarly fairness was at stake here; solidarity especially mattered. When I wrote I kept before me the question of how it would read to
a pregnant woman faced with what seemed her only concretely real choice of abortion. I kept pushing myself and the reader to ask the question, "What makes the largest and deepest sense here?" "How can we together achieve, however provisionally, more moral clarity and social solidarity here?"

Such questions, of course, can't be answered apart from other traditions and other voices and thus require a dialogic approach. Through my research and writings I found echoes among readers. I found myself on the advisory board of a small yet significant organization called The Common Ground Coalition for Life and Choice. The coalition is comprised of pro-life and pro-choice activists. There is no suppression of commitments or advocacies. But here each side is committed to a dialogue that searches for the possible overlap of their otherwise opposing integrities—pro-choice means non-coerced abortion and pro-life means reducing the circumstances which make abortion seem the only real choice—so that dialogue might lead to a cooperation premised on integrity and not mere compromise. There's no escape into ideology in this pro-life/pro-choice dialogue: each side challenges and is challenged to defend and deepen their principles in close contact with their opposing "principled other." A risky yet worthy challenge, it seemed then and still does.

**Seeking A Name and Academic Spaces For The Journeyman-Woman Practice Of A Dialogic Sociology: An Example**

The Association for the Sociology of Religion began as the American Catholic Sociological Society (1940-1967). It must immediately be noted that these explicitly Catholic sociologists did not consider their rejection of a "value-free sociology" as apologetics but (in anticipation of post-modernist critique of "neutral" knowledge) as intellectually honest and necessary for the advancement of a critical sociology which, for them, was aligned with the tradition of Catholic social thought. In continuity with this truthful ACSS aspiration some Catholic social scientists, reflecting the integralist dynamic in Roman Catholic thought, have recently formed (1992) the Society of Catholic Social Scientists. But the move by many American Catholic sociologists to disband the ACSS was prompted by something far deeper than mere careerist motivations to win recognition within the secular "mainstream."

Roman Catholicism has been profoundly shaped by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and must struggle to achieve more ecumenical, inter-faith and world-engaging spiritualities. Catholicism appears as an important actor in and influence on those world events, from the Philippines to Poland, connected with the demise of world communism and, closer to home, in those "boundary disputes" concerning law and morality lately called the "culture wars." On most of these issues, world Catholicism is found to align itself with the defense of human rights, indigenous culture, and the advancement of human solidarity no longer plausibly carried by Marxist and enlightenment ideologies. It is hard to see how Catholic sociologists could contribute to this
effort to build a more humane world in any setting that did not routinely involve ecumenical and interfaith dialogue with other social scientists. For this reason, it makes sense for us to view Roman Catholic social thought as part of the family of traditions associated with the Aristotelian spirit and seek professional spaces with others who share this humanistic tradition. To some degree, all confessionally committed sociologists could, without doing any violence to their integrities, conceive of their empirical inquires as part of an Aristotelian framework that rejects a "value-free" social science.

For Truth, For Ecumenism, For Integrity

I think "Aristotelian" is exactly the broad perspective by which the ecumenical and interfaith social science *journeymen-women* might wish to characterize their work. In this retrieval it's worth remembering that Comte claimed himself as the new "Aristotle." As we renounce the formalizing and controlling ambitions of positivism, we retrieve our continuity with the roots of patient empirical inquiry conducted in the framework of the pursuit of justice and virtue. Broadly conceived all social scientists who associate themselves with the Aristotelian spirit share the conviction that any notion of the intellectual life that severs observation and analysis from the pursuit of the good society betrays intelligence and violates the integrity of the intellectual. Dialogically considered, Roman Catholic social thought is a thick, rich and constantly renewed branch of the Aristotelian family tree. The tradition of Catholic social thought is neither imperial nor parochial. It enters the active pursuit of the common good, or the pursuit of justice, in dialogue where it challenges and is challenged by competing versions of justice and how best to achieve it. While this integrative Aristotelian spirit is particularly pronounced in the pluralist streams of Catholic social thought, in our global era of consciousness it's worth recalling that Aquinas was dependent on Islamic scholarship for his retrieval of Aristotle. It's heartening to note that among the tens of thousands of Hebrew and Yiddish texts recovered in Vilnius, Lithuania, once an unrivaled center of Jewish intellectual and spiritual renovation, were translations of Aristotle. All social science animated by convictions formed and nurtured by traditions with a strong sense of the good necessary for humans and humanity to flourish can be called *Aristotelian*. This characterization makes good scholarly and good ecumenical/interfaith sense, and thus carries and promotes the dialogic spirit carefully but joyously embraced by *journeymen* and *women* everywhere. In a social science dedicated to the empirical investigation of the prospects of human solidarity, the *apprentice* is too insecure for dialogue while the *master* is too aloof and self-removed from authentic dialogue. The dialogic inquiry of sociology requires most of all the grateful and rooted creativity of *journeymen* and *women*.

Aristotle is the ecumenical and humanistic exemplar of the sociological *journeyman*. The first line of the first book of his *Politics* begins, "Observation
tells us . . ." For Aristotle, the point of systematic observation was to better
discover how a state could be just. We can only do that in a polis, in dialogue
with others. Journeyman sociologists modestly connect their research to that
long line of thinkers who sought through honest and systematic observation to
contribute to the achievement of the good society. Without that aspiration, all
achievement is hollow and all intelligence mere brilliance.

Notes

1. What follows is adapted from a paper entitled "Looking for Echoes: From Apprentice to
Journeyman Sociologist" originally written for the August 7-10, 1997 Annual Association For
the Sociology of Religion Convention (Toronto) Session "Research and Biography: Life Work
in the Sociology of Religion". My thanks to Prof. Joseph A. Varacalli for inviting me to
contribute to a symposium on Catholics and the Practice of Social Science. I've retained the
tone and content from paper because its original setting remains important. My conviction is
that Catholic social thought is a treasure that is received in order to be shared. My experience
is that not many sociologists were (are?) waiting to share it; thus, Catholic sociologists must
customarily work on translations so that, in the classic Vatican II phrase, "men and women of
good will" might pay attention. Even stripped of its possible naiveté, I take this Vatican II
aspiration as normative. The world will never be "Catholic" in any majority way. We are a
permanent minority. The gospels call this a "leaven." Translation remains a permanent task of
the servant church. I'll consider critiques of my remarks as prods toward a better translation.

2. As will become clear (I hope) , here I am trying to translate my commitments to an
audience likely to be suspicious of any Catholic appropriation of the meaning of social science,
both for the negative reason of residual prejudice and the positive (though mistaken)
assumption that, somehow, social scientists have a calling to produce ideologically-free
explanations of how social forces mold human behavior. Journeyman is my attempt to gain
initial sympathy for a view of social science that is explicitly "traditioned" and which
self-consciously views its methodologies as phronetic practices aiming at dialogic
contributions towards the common good.

3. Right now, few sociologists, men or women, would happily join me in the category of
journeyman. Nobel Prize winners are not called journeymen and, indeed, are its opposite.
Commonly understood, journeyman is a polite way of being dismissive. The term appears as
early as 1403 and, sure enough, it meant "a hireling" or "one who drudges for another . . . .One
who having served his apprenticeship to a handicraft or trade, is qualified to work at it for day's
wages; a qualified mechanic or artisan who works for another. Distinguished on the one side
from apprentice, on the other from master." But there were always nuances which I wish to
highlight. The term, as a matter of fact, has grown progressively less pejorative. For example,
in 1864 Matthew Arnold was able to invite others to join him "to raise the standard among us
for what I have called the journeyman work of literature." Finally, the Catholic sociologist
wants to become part of the vast and deep tradition of Catholic social thought, not pose as its
"master". I'd use servant, but that's even more off-putting to mainstream sociologists than
journeywomen.

on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs: 50. Her next sentence is worth reading as well: "Immature
and facile assertion of independence may conceal what is actually surrender to untrustworthy
guides and influences, an undetected debilitating unfreedom" (50)

5. The 1996 Annual meeting of the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs
had as its theme "Spiritual Life and Intellectual Work" (emp.. added). In one of the published
essays ("Spirituality and Scholarly Intent, La Salle University, Philadelphia, Pa.: 16), James
Collins recalls the biblical phrase "One person sows and another reaps reaps." Then he
reflects: "We are involved in history as reapers of the thoughts and institutional achievements of others. Our awareness of being continuators of traditions should temper any self-congratulations and enliven our resolve to do effective historical interpretation. At the same time, we in turn are sowers whose creativity helps to shape the future." Spoken like a true journeyman.

6. In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jagerstatter (1966). Another scandal. Though just beginning graduate studies I was asked to review this permanently significant book. This was grossly inappropriate, although as an apprentice I did not realize it at the time. Later I learned from Ralph Lane (August, 1997) that many in the American Catholic Sociological Society did not consider In Solitary Witness "real sociology"!!! As many know, Zahn's research led to an Austrian public television program on Jagerstatter and to a collective examination of Austrian conscience. There is a Jagerstatter "canonization movement". As a founder of Pax Christi USA, Zahn played a part in both Vatican II's reevaluation of just war theory and pacifism and in the analysis of the American Catholic Bishops' The Challenge of Peace (1983). Now that's a journeyman!!!

7. Another puzzle was the unhappiness of my fellow graduate students. As Harvard apprentices they should have been, I had naively imagined, stark raving happy--they had been invited to join the alleged brightest and the best. But my first year peers did not long remain happy. They were all very bright and had very many options available to them when they graduated college. Almost all of them thought they might have been happier if they had chosen another path; they mentioned law school very often. I was further amazed to learn during one of our bull sessions that I was the only one who was getting a Ph.D. because that's what you needed to teach. Our apprenticeship, it seemed, was to a career, not a calling. Only a calling sustains disappointments and frustrations experienced without whiny second thoughts. There were invitations to mastery but not to dialogue. Mastery brings control, not happiness. That brings me to how sociology understood vocation .

8. That's something much deeper than Weber's allowance of value relevance as the starting point of hypothesis formation. The comment I most make on student papers is, "But what's your point?" I think my problem-- defining objectivity as suppressing commitments --was the reason for my graduate school classmates' unhappiness. They were not being encouraged to find their point of view, what they felt some obligation to author, to contribute to. I was envious of my colleagues in the English Department. They could always bring great stuff to their classes - Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Virginia Woolf. I had Parsons and Homans and methodology. My sociology bag of stuff seemed only to lead to what Ricouer once called a "spectator point of view". But truth comes not from passively viewing but from honest engagement. The only interesting move one can make from a "spectator point of view" is the negative act of debunking. But by this time--the 70s--my students were already skilled debunkers, so (at a minimum) it seemed unfair to require tuition for a course in sociological debunking that was, though more systematic, less colorful than their own.

9. In the mid 1970s I hoped that John Rawls might painlessly extricate me from this puzzle of separating justice talk from commitments. By then I could not pretend I did not know that sociology required a point of view and that this point of view had to be based on some notion of justice. The good society, and thus the good sociologist, must aim at justice. John Rawls begins his famous A Theory Of Justice (1971: 3-4) with this oratorio of a sentence: "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economic must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust . . . Being first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising." I did not want to appear as though my sociology was infected by either parochialism or philosophy. Courage did not come quickly. The methodological strategies John Rawls employed struck me as fortuitously congruent with the notions of social science objectivity that I had been apprenticed to by my sociological masters, especially Rawls' methodological fictions the veil of ignorance and the original position. In his conception of justice as fairness Rawls instructs us to
deliberately "forget" all personal characteristics—not merely religion and race and status and gender but also IQ, temperament—everything, our entire genetic lottery; thus, to be fair and not seek our own advantage, when we seek to examine our principles of action we must place ourselves in the original position to decide what principles would be "just." What could be a deeper and more profound "objectivity," my lingering apprentice self asked, than a methodology that led us to examine our principles of justice in ways that must be universally fair? Rawls seemed to promise a truly "neutral" starting point for our analyses—a truly non-encumbered and transcendent self. There was even more. Besides an objectivity I thought sellable to sociologists, Rawls gave me, as Weber had not, explicit methodological principles that promoted a more egalitarian (at least national) society. Rawls said that behind the veil of ignorance and in the original position we—everyone—would choose two principles: (a) a maximum of liberty so that we might realize our life project whatever it turned out to be; and (b) the difference principle, which required that, although some inequalities were necessary for cultural advancement and economic progress, these differences had to be justified by the empirical demonstration that they improved the lot of the worst off. Rawls grounded an egalitarian research project premised on principles wholly congruent with a value neutrality requiring only enlightened self-interest. To this apprentice, Rawls promised both Weberian neutrality and a Hebraic-Christian regard for the poor. With Rawls in hand I faced my students and even wrote a few articles and convention papers on the compatibility of justice as fairness with classical notions of social science objectivity. As I mentioned above, to my apprentice naiveté, Rawls promised everything I needed: A notion of justice, Weberian-pure in its formal neutrality, that pushed the first principle of our liberal society—an unencumbered self protecting whatever project it freely choose—to notions of equality premised on and promising social solidarity. Unlike Marxism, justice as fairness did not require an absolute leveling but that any inequality required for the progressive development of society demonstrably be shown to benefit those who were worst off. Sociology could have both Weber and the option for the poor. Alas, Rawls turned out to be not a final destination but only a last apprentice stop. From students and elsewhere I learned that if you want the former—value neutrality—you're not likely to get the latter—a more egalitarian society. Students (and I presume readers) raised the most elementary questions. Why place myself in the original position? What do I do if I'm in Rawls' original position while others aren't? Students would passively give veil of ignorance exam answers, but it never made concrete sense to them and never seemed to deeply challenge them to move much beyond the principle of "equal opportunity" and meritocracy that powerfully masqueraded as justice in American society. Unrooted in any appeals to identity and integrity, Rawls justice as fairness remained mostly intellectual abstraction.

10. "Fact and Value in Contemporary Sociology," Thought, Vol. 57, No. 224, March 1982: 128-147. I concluded that in western liberal thought the consciously self-alienated mind is sanctioned and moralized. "Western liberal societies generally, and value-free sociology specifically, will continue to attract moral and intellectual allegiance, though the final destiny of both are uncertain. For the social scientist it is only when he or she finds that, in the face of ultimate forms of human destruction, professional neutrality and value-free analysis are destructive of intellect and community, will the issue be posed in such a way that creative evasion is no longer possible. But this is dramatically phrased and such turning points in history cannot be foreseen. But it is on their absence that the moral and intellectual foundations of a Kantian/Weberian social science rests. Here, too, history will have the final word. World history, and its impact on biography, and not the internal logic of science, will decide the fate of the persistent and recurrent controversies within social science and its connections with normative analysis" (146).

12. But the initiators certainly underestimated its costs. The 50 Year Index for American Catholic Sociological Review and Sociological Analysis records 28 items under the heading of "Religious Social Thought" (which includes Catholic/Christian/Jewish social thought). All but 3 appeared when the journal was the American Catholic Sociological Review. I was a graduate student at the time, so I could only overhear the arguments offered by both sides. I do remember Gordan Zahn admonishing those whom later day Catholic critics called the "Americanists" that by changing the American Catholic Sociological Society into the Association for the Sociology of Religion they would lose the "fellowship" important for critical thought and its predictable marginality. To me, working within the Association for the Sociology of Religion seems a necessary act of faith. The faith is that ASR might become, still, an authentically ecumenical-interfaith dialogue about the pilgrimage toward human solidarity rather than a mere and envious shadow of its prestigious parent figure—the American Sociological Association. It's worth noting that the program theme for the August 9-13, 1997 annual convention of the American Sociological Association was "Bridges for Sociology: International and Interdisciplinary." Along the same lines, the Chair of the "Peace & War" section of the ASA recently wrote in the newsletter about the section's discussion about its proper name. (May 1997) She mentioned a remark by a member of the South American Peace Commission that he found "insecurity was caused by poverty, unemployment and violence . . . . The problem of security for the people we interviewed had nothing to do with the threat from neighboring countries and those things we traditionally think of as the links between problems of security and other problems that sociologists study." The 1997 membership application brochure for the Society for the Study of Social Problems even more explicitly encourages sociologists to "Get Active in the Pursuit of Social Justice." Seems to me that the Second Vatican Council, however interpreted, requires Catholic sociologists to join these discussions about peace and justice. Again, Catholics don't like "either/or" dichotomies. I might also mention here that as soon as it was announced I joined the Society of Catholic Social Scientists.

13. In his recent The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship (Oxford, 1997: 10) George M. Marsden, persuasively makes the case for a specifically Christian presence in academia, suggests the term "faith-informed" scholarship. Of course, I have no quarrel with the term. But the very reasons he suggests for it—in pluralistic settings it may be best not to use "Christian," "Jewish," "Islamic" and so forth—convince me of the even more appropriate (inviting, ecumenical, etc.) adjective Aristotelian. With our tradition of "natural law", this might be more attractive than to scholars from the reformed Protestant tradition. As befits a journeyman, I should immediately acknowledge the non-originality of this suggestion. Alasdair MacIntyre (After Virtue, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981; Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?, London: Duckworth, 1988; Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition, 1990) has long and persuasively argued that the close relation between moral philosophy and sociology is best conceived in the neo-Aristotelian framework which seeks the truth about the good for humans in the phronetic embodiment of virtuous practices as preserved in the memory of traditions that enact wisdom in its narratives, rituals and exemplars. When Charles Taylor (Human Agency and Language (1985); Philosophy and The Human Sciences (1985), Cambridge University Press) concludes his argument for a hermeneutical human science that "puts an end to any aspiration to a value-free or 'ideology-free' science of man" he adds "To say this is not to say anything new: Aristotle makes a similar point in Book 1 of the Ethics. But it is still radically shocking and unassimilable to the mainstream of modern science" (11: 57).


15. For myself, I consider Catholic social thought as its central, permanent, sturdy trunk, nourishing the many branches mistakenly seeking an independent and momentarily prominent place in the day's sun.