It has been sufficiently remarked that how we ought to answer the question of the moral and political legitimacy of the characteristically dominant institutions of modernity turns on how we decide an issue in the philosophy of the social sciences.

Alasdair MacIntyre

...nothing entitles us to assume that man has a nature or essence in the same sense as other things.

Hannah Arendt

INTRODUCTION

In the course of describing the culture of conflict, some alternatives to it and some criticisms of it were sketched. An illustration was provided of the possibility of adopting maieutic rather than eristic assumptions about reason, feeling, meaning, truth, and the self. The conflict-centered view of the passions was shown to be a myth. It is false because it ignores the intentional character of emotions--the way in which they, like all of experience, are structured by interpretations we can choose to revise in rational ways.

Also, social scientists were said to have failed and failed profoundly. They have not been able to develop a value neutral, mathematical system of the laws of efficient causality. Most social scientists, with the exception of economists (and more about that later on), admit this themselves. Their Galileo has not arrived and they have not discovered a single genuine law of social reality. For example, in reviewing the literature of peace and conflict research, Kenneth Boulding notes that studies seeking out the causes of war and peace

...have been frustratingly disappointing. For instance, Professor Rudi Rimmell’s studies of the dimensionality of nations, while they have employed the most sophisticated statistical methods, have failed to come up with any clear correlates of the incidence of war and peace.

Why is this? Social science has no spring chicken. Like the audience of Beckett’s Waiting for Godot, we
cannot help but wonder: What has detained Monsieur Galileo? Will he really come? Can he really exist at all? Or could it be that we are not waiting properly? Might it be that social science has been quite fundamentally misconceived and wrongly practiced?

In Beckett’s play, a child brings a brief message each day, one that sustains some dim hope. On of the amazing things about children is that, apart from whatever preparation their biology provides, they are born entirely ignorant of their culture. In the course of remarkably few years they manage to learn an extraordinary amount about the social life of human beings around them. In a very important sense, their progress in understanding is much more rapid than that of contemporary social science.

Of course, the kind of understanding they achieve is of a different sort. They do not discover a set of laws which provide disinterested theoretical explanations. They acquire a set of competencies which enable them to participate in their culture in a purposive and critical way. But, then again, perhaps something somehow like this is the proper kind of knowledge to seek when we engage in systematic and intensive studies of social reality.

Here, in Part III, we will find that this is indeed the case. We will find that social reality has basic features that distinguish it and that it can only be understood in a non-Galilean way using a critical participatory method. It will turn out that that method requires that the researchers must engage in certain limited forms of peacemaking as a part of their cognitive study itself. It will also turn out that as we achieve a critical, participatory understanding of social reality we find that most rational activity is non-instrumental-- is a process more like cultivating a hobby than manipulating a machine. We will find, furthermore, that the assumptions underlying the maieutic style of reasoning are, in fact, superior to those underlying the eristic style.

And as Part III progresses, we will find that we have eminently sound reasons for rejecting the dominant culture of conflict and adopting a network of assumptions that lead us to view differences between people as aspects of shared problems rather than oppositions between competitors. This network of beliefs will provide a framework, in Part IV, for developing a theory of peace. It will be a theory that views peace as an activity that employs maieutic reasoning, critical participatory understanding, and non-instrumental modes of cultivating our projects and practices.

Chapter 9: How Social Reality Is Intended To Be Understood

The peace that occurs in the social realm-- where does it occur? What is social reality?

There is a basic difference between things studied by natural scientists and social scientists. It is a very striking difference. Physicists cannot converse with quarks. Enzymes can offer us no descriptions or
explanations of their movements. When a rock flies through an embassy window, it has no idea what it is doing. In contrast, the rioter who throws it does. He has an idea of what he is doing and why.

The point applies here now. You are caught up just now in a bit of social activity: reading this book. You have some idea of what you are doing and why. In fact, you have many such "ideas." For instance, you have a notion of what the alphabet is and what a letter in it looks like. Similarly, you have notions of what sorts of things, words, complete sentences, theses, pieces of evidence, arguments, and books are. And you are experiencing these marked pages in terms of these concepts. When you see a mark here you see it as a letter, rather than just a squiggle of lines. And even if spaces are left out you still interpret these as marking sentences expressing words. And the same with incomplete sentences. Just as importantly, you interpret these as specific words and sentences with specific meanings. If this cluster of paper was handed to a Cromagnon woman and man, they would see something. But they would not be able to read it, because they lack the skill-- and they would not even see it as a book of letters, words and sentences because they would lack these concepts. (One way or perhaps beginning to get some inkling of what they would see is to consider a sequence of text which disengages Normal C- ing and then stare at a single letter like this l until it starts to look odd.)

Similar sorts of points apply in contexts where we are reading signs on a highway, the traces on a trail, the expression on someone's face, the surface of a trout stream, the movements of a crowd, the current economic indicators or anything else we might run into on that great stream-like highway we think of as the book of life. One way the general point is often put is to say that social activity is intentional-- intentional in the same sense we earlier saw emotions are. Whenever we feel something inside or perceive something outside we feel or perceive it as something; we interpret it. Similarly, whenever we act, engaging the world with our bodies, we perform the movements as something. By waving my hand vigorously from left to right I can do many things: signal cars to halt, gesture hello to a friend, shake off a fly, threaten a dog, or dismiss a passing bum. But I can perform this arm waving as one of these acts (rather than some other) only if I have some idea of what I am doing-- some intended description that interprets it. Part of what makes the same pattern of physical movements be one act in one situation and another in some other setting is the interpretation of the setting and them movement which I myself adopt.

This intentional character of social activity is a fundamental and profoundly decisive feature of social reality. Social phenomena are in part composed of and constituted by descriptions and explanations people themselves have of what they are doing. The intentional understanding of what you are doing now in reading here does not come as an afterthought. It is not as though if someone asked you what you were doing you might say "Well, let me see...Here's a hypothesis! Perhaps I'm reading. Let's test it and see if I am right."

The understanding is not something external to the action which you might simply arrive at the way an outside observer would. It makes the act the particular act it is. What makes a flip of the finger an insult (rather than a stretching twitch or a joke) involves the beliefs the flipper has concerning how the flippee will interpret the gesture and the desire he has that that sort of interpretation be adopted. In a world without such interpretations, there would be no insults.
It is this intentional character that makes our activity distinctively social and human rather than merely animal. Mice would never insult one another. And, like the lilies of the field, they never spin nor toil nor perform labor of any sort. This is not because God provides for them. It is because they have no ideas and make no interpretations and so thought they "emit" a great deal of behaviour, they do not perform any actions at all.

This intentionality suggests a kind of double-barreled working hypothesis concerning how we should study human activity. On one hand, because people always already have some understanding of what they are doing and why, it would seem that if we want descriptions and explanations of their activity, we can simply ask people themselves to provide them. On the other hand, because social phenomena are, at least in part, constituted by the selfunderstandings the agents have, it would seem that to study them properly we must ask them. We must find out what their own interpretations of their activities are. So it seems that social researchers can and must acquire an understanding of people’s activities by asking the people themselves to provide descriptions and explanations of what they are up to.

This double-barreled hypothesis needs qualification and elaboration. (It is not as though we should just write down whatever people tell us about themselves and then publish it as finished research!) And we need a more developed account of the "social reality is shot through with intentionality" thesis, one that explains its relevance to notions of meaning, reason, feeling, and the eristic notions discussed earlier. And we need to develop an account of what the views of social science, social reality and reasoning that thus emerge have to tell us about the nature of rational action in general. But as we do so, we will begin to formulate notions that make it possible to understand peace as a kind of activity which rests on the kind of understanding you have when you converse--a kind of understanding we will never have of quarks.

Chapter 10: Holism in the Parts

Social reality is intentional in the sense discussed in Chapter 6. All our actions and reactions involve some kind of self-understanding and interpretation. But much of our activity is also intentional in the narrower, instrumentalist sense of the term. Often, we not only know what we are doing, we know what we are trying to get done. We not only have some understanding of what is going on, we conceive of what we are doing in terms of some aim we are trying to accomplish, some purpose we are trying to realize.

However, we understand these instrumental intentions in terms of the background of understandings which make our activity intentional in the broad sense. We understand our employment of means to achieve ends in terms of more general beliefs about the world and more general values we hold. We also
understand them in terms of more particular kinds of knowledge which we may find it difficult to express
in propositions: knowledge by acquaintance, expressive understandings, and know-how.

Suppose we exercise the social researcher’s advantage over the physicist (who is stuck with non-
conversant quarks and we ask someone "What are you doing?" The person is likely to reply with a
statement of an instrumental intention, something like: "I am writing an appeal to my senator to try to get
her to vote against the funding of a new missile system." Or: "I am ordering my troops to spray tear gas
into the mob in order to get the people to disperse from the capitol square." If we follow up with the
question "Why are you doing this?" we may receive two different sorts of replies. One sort will explain
why the means employed has been chosen over some other. This part of the explanation will include
beliefs about the facts in this particular situation and beliefs about how, in general, the world works. For
example:

"I am writing because my senator has not yet made up her mind and because senators are sometimes
influenced by letters from constituents.

or:

"I am ordering the spraying of tear gas because the crowd did not comply with the verbal command to
disperse and because this stuff is an effective means of disabling the people it hits, intimidating the ones
nearby, and getting the crowd to break up."

If we ask why they have made these particular judgements of fact and why they have adopted these
beliefs about what will work, we find that they relied in part on specific observations. But they also base
their judgements on very general views about physical laws of nature, psychological theories of
motivation, and beliefs about social institutions.

Instead of considering the choice of their means, people may take the question "Why are you doing this?"
to concern the end that has been adopted. Their replies may initially take the form of an appeal to some
more general end:

"I am trying to persuade my senator so the funding bill will be defeated. I am trying to get it defeated so
there will be a slowdown in the arms race and more money will be available for education and social
welfare activities. I am trying to achieve these things in order to promote peace and prosperity."

or:

"I am trying to disperse the crowd so order will be restored in the capitol. I am trying to restore order so
the government can function smoothly. I am trying to achieve that in order to promote peace and
prosperity."

Typically, the justification of specific ends in terms of increasingly more general ones comes to a
Part III

terminus with an appeal to some general value which the most general end will help to realize: peace, prosperity, happiness, self-actualization, justice, law and order, spiritual fulfillment, or something of this sort.

The beliefs and values people use to explain their instrumental actions form a network. It is a network with a feature of decisive importance: the meanings involved are interdependent. Both the letter writer and the crowd disperser may speak of using "persuasion" to achieve their ends. But they clearly have different notions of persuasion in mind. To find out what these different notions are, we learn about their more general views of human psychology and the specific techniques that exemplify the kind of persuasion they have in mind.

Likewise, both may speak of trying to promote "peace and prosperity." But, again, their conceptions of these may be markedly different. To understand the phrase, we must learn how they believe peace and prosperity are related to other notions and practices like distributive equality, retributive justice, laissez faire economics, civil disobedience, and electoral politics. We must also learn what they think of as good examples of peace and prosperity.

One way the thrust of this point is sometimes put is to say that meaning is holistic. Sentences are organically related, "interanimating" each other-- giving meaning to others and taking meaning from other sentences and practices that form a context for their use.

The analysis so far has five very important consequences for social research. First, to understand someone’s instrumental intention we must understand the network of beliefs and practices that provide a context for it.

Second, their action is not an effect of efficient causes of the kind of Galilean social scientists have tried to discover. Instead, it is motivated by reasons that people believe justify their choices. The distinction is important. Flying rocks and chemicals in tear gas have no goals they may fail to achieve and no beliefs which may turn out to be false. They simply move and combine as they are caused to. They have no reasons which may be in error and so they cannot make mistakes.

In contrast, rioters and police can. In fact, we all can and do make mistakes in almost every arena of social life. This is because our activities are structured in terms of beliefs and values which tell us what we are doing and distinguish better and worse ways of doing it. When we type a letter, pitch a stone, negotiate a deal, or reprimand an employee we are performing activities that are defined in terms of norms and goals that tell us what success requires-- and ways in which we ought to pursue it.

To understand the flight of a rock, we need only know how forces efficiently cause it to fly. And it would be absurd to say: "Stop stone! You should not move like that!" But to understand persons who throw stones we need to learn the reasons that led them to think or feel they ought to fling it and the beliefs they hold that motivate their throwing it overhand rather than underhand-- beliefs that may be justified or in error.
Third, we see now why the Galilean quest for value neutral descriptions of social reality cannot succeed. Social reality is structured in terms of values that define it, that make it what it is. We cannot explain what someone is doing without referring to the norms they are trying to follow and the values they are trying to realize. A full explanation of why a chess player moves a pawn in a particular way must include an account of the rules that prescribe the ways pawns ought to be moved and the tactical goal he or she is trying to achieve.

We cannot even accurately describe a chess game or battle unless we define it in terms of value-laden concepts like "effective strategy," "casualties," and "winning." If we try to sanitize our language and speak only of "arm movements," "interactions of forces," "body counts," and other "incidents" we end up with a description of physical events that have no special significance. To describe social reality we must characterize it in terms of value-laden interpretations that define it.

A fourth point to note is that social reality is structured by normative institutions rather than natural laws. The difference is fundamental. Institutions can be changed, laws of nature cannot.

The laws of genetics that govern things like the inheritance of intelligence, racial characteristics, and sex differences are what they are. Whatever they are, they are here to stay. We can manipulate the effects of these laws through selective breeding, but we cannot alter the laws themselves.

In contrast, the norms and institutions that govern child rearing, race relations, and marriage are institutions that have been instituted. At some point in history they were set up. They may not have been set up deliberately by people with clear goals and instrumental intentions. But they did emerge in a social context in which they were defined in ways that were "intentional" in the broad sense of the term. They were defined in terms of interpretations and these interpretations can be revised.

Even a regularity as basic as the normal rhythm of sleep and wakefulness is "institutional" in this sense. Humans have a biological need for sleep. And our biology and environment have, in most cases, had this result: It makes sense to sleep at night and be awake during the day. Furthermore, parents tell their children when they ought to go to sleep. Schools, businesses, and churches schedule their activities around "reasonable" hours. Prior to the discovery of electricity, most of humankind found sunlit hours were the most "reasonable." But neon lights, factories that are expensive to shut down, or the opportunity to go smelt fishing at high tide during a new moon may lead us to decide that other hours are more reasonable.

These sort of things may lead us to revise our institutions. Likewise, we may choose to revise the way we interpret differences in intelligence, race, or sex. A feature pervading social reality for millennia may seem so regular and basic as to be virtual law of humankind. But then we may suddenly discover good reasons to revise the interpretations on which these are based-- and new institutions emerge. In the United States today, the roles women have traditionally played in child care and industry are being revised in just this sort of way. As they are, a host of statistical regularities are reported by the Census Bureau are changing.
Those statistics are important and well worth studying. But with Galilean social scientists are mistaken when the suppose that these provide correlations that reflect mathematical natural laws that explain social reality. The figures they find only provide statistics that describe the numbers of people who have chosen to accept-- or at least chosen not to change-- the institutions in which they participate.

These first four points do not mean that physical causes play no part in social reality or that researchers should not worry about avoiding bias.

The efficient causes and effects that natural scientists provide the necessary conditions for social reality. A knowledge of how soil gets depleted can help explain why an agricultural community stagnates economically-- because rich soil is necessary for certain crops. Also, many physical conditions which are not necessary can, nonetheless, contribute to motivating action. Drought is not required before farmers migrate, but it may give them a good reason for moving on. But these necessary and contributory physical conditions are never sufficient in and of themselves. They are not Galilean "efficient causes" that make things happen.

The key point is this: They are simply physical conditions that must be interpreted before they enter into social reality at all. The drought only motivates the farmers to move when they name it or think about it in some way-- and the ways they interpret it may vary. They may view it as an accident of nature, a natural part of the rhythm of life, or a punishment being inflicted upon them by a wrathful God. As a result, they may view themselves rational opportunists who are moving to greener pastures, quasi-nomads who are following the wheel of life, or a people who must retreat for a time until they have exculpated their guilt before God. In each case, the "migration" is a different act and must be understood in the distinctive terms the movers themselves use to define it.

These terms are value-laden, but the researcher who uses them need not be "biased" in any objectionable way. This point will be considered later in more detail in a discussion of objectivity and completeness in social theory. Here, the point to note is that the researcher who uses the farmers’ own value-laden terms to describe their activity is not introducing a bias of his or her own or making personal value judgments. He or she is simply describing what the farmers are doing.

The first four points just considered bring us to a fifth. To understand people we must (1) learn how their own network of holistic meanings provides a context (2) that they take to give them reasons which justify their actions (3) in terms of value-laden notions (4) and normative institutions that-- unlike the laws of nature-- can be revised. The fifth point is that our understanding of these require participation. To see how they understand their own activity, we cannot just peek at them for a moment. We must enter into their social world as they conceive it.

I speak here of "entering into a world" rather than merely of "observing it at length" because much the understanding that provides the context for such holistic meaning is not the sort that can be simply stated in propositions and reported by observers.
Chapter 11: Participation in the Whole

There are indispensable kinds of understanding that require participation. To see why, consider the following direction the questions we ask people can take. It is the direction taken when we ask not "Why are you doing this?" but "How are you doing this?"

At first the reply to the "How?" question typically takes the form of some more detailed description of the way the means employed is enacted:

"How am I writing to my senator? Well, I am taking out a sheet of paper and sketching the key points I want to make and then typing them up in a style I think will be sincere and forceful without sounding threatening."

The answer as to how the order to spray tear gas is being delivered and implemented might be provided by a recitation of a standard form for commands and a technical recipe for spraying which was memorized in training sessions-- one which specifies how the device will be fired, how it is to be aimed, whom it should be aimed at and so on. We can go on to ask, further, how each step in these processes is performed. And in reply to the answers offered we can ask again: "And how, precisely, do you do that?" (How do you engage the senator’s interest with your opening remark? How do you raise a question at the start? How do you type a question mark?)

Eventually we reach a point at which the person finds it difficult to answer. Some perceptions, expressions of feeling and actions seem so basic as to be starting points for explanations-- starting points which cannot themselves be explained. How do you distinguish red things from green ones? How do you express feelings of calm with a smile? How do you raise your hand?

The ability to do these sorts of things does not require propositional knowledge of how we do them. It does not require the ability to use words to accurately state beliefs about how they are done. And propositional knowledge about the skill does not give someone the ability to use the skill itself.

Instead, such abilities require three different kinds of knowledge: Knowledge by acquaintance, expressive understanding, and know-how. These three root belief in practice and make understanding require participation. They require that we take part in a community if we are to genuinely understand it. They require this regardless of whether our motives in seeking understanding are pacific, predatory, or purely cognitive.

Colors and sound qualities (like the tone of an oboe) provide the simplest examples of the first,
knowledge by acquaintance. An educated person who has been blind from birth may be able to say as much or more about the color of blood as a sighted person can. His beliefs may well match reality more accurately. Yet there is something the sighted know which he does not. They know what blood looks like, because they have seen it.

Likewise, people may have knowledge by acquaintance of much more complex things like facial features and body types characteristic of ethnic groups. I know by acquaintance what Swedes and Italians look like. I do not-- at least usually-- reason out my assessment in any explicit way. I simply see them as Swedes and Italians.

While such knowledge requires direct experience, it requires more than mere exposure. We must learn to attend to the relevant features of things and we require general concepts to form ideas of such features. We must have some conception-- even I it is only rough and pre-verbal-- of ethnic types before we can learn to identify facial types. But on the other hand, knowledge by acquaintance is itself required to understand fully what general concepts like ethnic type mean.

Such knowledge by acquaintance is, then, related to more general notions in two ways: it gives meaning to them and also derives meaning from them. It fills them in and gives them specific import, and it also tacitly presupposes them. One way this is sometimes put is to say that our general ideas or theories are "context dependent" and that our perceptions are always "theory laden."

People may have different "perceptual types." They may literally see things differently in styles that are reflected in differences in the ways they draw on what they see and respond to it. Children who early on acquire different styles for perceiving flesh and clothing and gesture may come to have quite different understandings of what "woman," "man," and "sex" mean. Conversely, adults who later on acquire different beliefs may come to perceive the world differently. Because of the differences in the concepts they bring to the viewing of it, a butchered cow will be visually perceived in different ways by a biologist, a meat inspector, a painter, a Moslem or a Hindu.

In a similar way, our understanding of expressions of feelings turns out to have a double connection of reciprocity in relation to general ideas.

Very young children often do not know what they feel. As adult, we often have only vague awareness of our feelings. This is true of physical feelings-- a child requires practice to learn to distinguish stomach aches from hunger. It is also true of the rich and varied feelings attendant upon our social activity. The subtle emotions of life often seem hard to pin down-- until we read some poem or hear some piece of music which expresses the vague feelings and we have an experience of recognition. "Aha!" we may say. "That’s just the way I have felt."

If we are asked "And what is that precisely?" we may find ourselves at a loss. It is not as though a melody has a message that can be stated in a proposition like: "I am experiencing meandering loneliness." The expressive understanding provided by a work like "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock"
or "The Moonlight Sonata" is something different from propositional knowledge-- different in kind.

Expressive understanding is not necessarily better or worse, it is simply different. Most art (some would say all good art) provides such expressive understanding, and much language and gesture does as well. The delicate nuance of after-dinner diplomatic overtures and the power of gripping public rhetoric cannot be understood apart from expressive understanding of this sort. Likewise, in everyday conversations of our ordinary activities like child care, making appointments, talking about the news and playing cards, a central role is played by expressive understanding.

Again, such non-propositional knowledge is related to more general ideas in two ways. It gives them content and it presupposes them. The samurai’s bows and his world view, like the British gentleman’s bows and his world view, are interdependent in their meaning. Knowledge by acquaintance and expressive understanding share this characteristic with a third kind of non-propositional knowledge-- one often referred to as "know-how."

Know-how consists of skills acquired through practice, skill which can involve varying levels of complexity and expertise. Some (such as touch typing and marksmanship) involve primarily motor skills. Others (such as letter writing and crowd control) may involve a wide range of verbal and intrapersonal skills as well. Clearly people can have know-how of these sorts without having much in the way of theoretical knowledge about how it is that they manage to do them well. I can know how to ride a bike without being able to explain the bio-physics involved or the intentional (but non-verbal) conscious efforts I make. Often people with great skill at negotiation or public speaking are quite inept at teaching their skill-- or even incapable of describing it in an illuminating way.

This is not to say that general beliefs and notions are irrelevant to skill acquisition. Quite the opposite is true. For example, general conceptions of persuasion and beliefs about human psychology characterize the context and set the standards in terms of which skills at letter writing and crowd control are defined. Conversely, these general notions are given concrete meaning by the skills and practices in which they are applied. The point is simply that these general notions can-- and most typically do-- function implicitly. In learning the skill, we acquire a tacit understanding of a host of conceptions of the types of things to be dealt with and also a host of values which indicate how they ought to be dealt with-- values internalized via role-modeling, testing techniques, rules of thumb, feels for "how these things should look (or smell)," precedents, metaphors, simple cases used as paradigms, coached trial and error, hints, and visionary rhetoric.

One can acquire a skill at "hard selling" cars or teaching kindergarten with the Montessori method without being very capable in offering explicit explanations of the general beliefs and values these practices presuppose. But one cannot learn such skills without some tacit understanding of the background such beliefs and values provide, and the background views cannot be understood apart from a grasp of skilled activities of these sorts.

Speaking a language like English-- or a dialect or jargon specific to a local community-- involves know-
how. This is a point of central importance for social research. No amount of purely theoretical linguistics can enable someone to become a competent speaker of a language. Language is learned in practice, not in theory. To learn to understand what people say about themselves, we must converse with them. We must practice the use of their language in the contexts in which it is actually used. This means that social researchers must begin their study by participating in the communities they wish to study.

This claim—that social researchers must participate in the communities they study—is a strong one. It is a claim which runs counter to the dominant, Galilean view of methodology adopted by practicing social scientists. On that view, social researchers can only achieve objectivity through observation. Direct participation leads to personal involvements, subjective reporting, and biased theorizing.

It is supposed that there is a rather strict analogy between natural and social science. First rate theoretical physicists can use the data supplied by experimental physicists but lack the know-how that enables the experimentalists to deal with complex (and often very temperamental) laboratory devices. By analogy, it is thought that there can be first-rate social theorists who use data supplied by field workers but who lack the skills required to participate in the institutions of the communities they study.

However, they claim that competent social theorists must have a participatory understanding has two important merits: it is widely believed and it is true.

It--or a version of it--is widely believed by practicing lawyers, teachers, midwives, counselors, politicians, soldiers, business executives, and administrators. Such people are often hesitant to argue in public that they have a better idea of what is going on in courts or classrooms or Congress than do the social scientists who come in as objective bystanders and observe. But these people typically affirm something like this in private. Often they adopt a cagey stance and say that they have a kind of understanding which is different.

They are hesitant to argue it is better for a very good reason. Much of the knowledge they have learned at the bar or in the battlefield is tacit rather than explicit. It consists of knowledge by acquaintance, expressive understanding, and know-how which they cannot articulate as propositional knowledge. So they are not able to articulatedly argue for the superiority of their understanding. They find it hard to say what it is that enables them to recognize a distinct mood in a jury or class or patient or employee. They find it difficult to say what the significance of a gesture or piece of rhetoric is. They are not able to explain in a neat or rigorous way how they are reasoning when they appeal to precedent or guide the discussion of a seminar group or carry out a battle strategy in the thick of the action. But they know that such understanding is something they have acquired through participation and practice, and they know that their understanding of what is going on in the trial, counseling session, or political campaign is deeply rooted in such non-propositional knowledge.

Such shared understanding is often mutually acknowledged through the sort of wink or nod which captures a moment—or the sort of quiet smile that savors a situation in silence. But in general, when lawyers or teachers wonder if someone else really understands what is going on—whether the other be a
Part III

novice practitioner or a social scientist-- they have a fairly clear standard with which they judge. They ask, simply: Can this person get things done and talk sense in the context of the institution of the law or the school system? Can he or she win cases or teach? Can he or she talk about the cases or classes in ways that make sense to other skilled lawyers or teachers?

This participation-based criterion of understanding is, of course, one that social scientists reject. In doing so, they have made a fundamental mistake. Why? An analogy to natural science helps to explain. Galileo advised the physicists of his day to study geometry and algebra because, as he put it, "nature speaks mathematics." The subsequent success of the Galilean tradition of physical science speaks highly for the wisdom of this belief as well as the assumption on which it is based, namely, that to accurately describe and explain a kind of thing we must "speak its language."

This point has an obvious corollary for social research. For people do not, by and large, speak mathematics. Instead, they speak "ordinary" or "natural" (rather than artificial) languages like English and Spanish. Such languages are not axiomatizable and they cannot be adequately expressed in rigorous and formal systems of abstract symbols. Their meanings can be only understood through participation in the kinds of social activities that provide the context for their use.

To put the central point more straightforwardly-- dispensing with the analogy to natural science-- we can say the following/ The social reality that social researchers seek to describe and explain is constituted by understandings people themselves have of the activities in which they engage. These understandings are expressed in ordinary languages rife with vagarities of syntax and semantics and which are rooted in practices and contexts in which non-verbal elements play decisive roles. To accurately describe and explain such social reality, researchers must begin (though by no means rest content) with a knowledge of those activities as they are understood-- and constituted-- in these natural languages. So, to do competent research, they must participate in the kinds of communities they wish to study. This is true whether the community they study is a Zande tribe, a Hutterite commune, a type of business clique or a kind of diplomat.

Among many anthropologists, this point is held to be non-controversial. Their experience convinces them empirically of the necessity of field work for adequate theory and the necessity of participation for adequate field work.

Among philosophers, particularly those who have explored Ludwig Wittgenstein's notion of a "form of life"-- or the phenomenologists' notion of a lebenswelt-- the claim that the competent understanding of social activity requires participatory understanding is likewise fairly non-controversial. The kind of analysis which has led to such a conclusion is difficult to summarize. It calls for extended and detailed consideration of specific concepts and specific ways in which our understandings of them are related to practices of various sorts. As Wittgenstein emphasizes, we must "look and see." But the principal kinds of things we find when we do look and see can perhaps be summed up under two headings: the "family resemblance" structure of concepts in ordinary language and the nature of meaning as "use."
The classic analysis of family resemblance occurs in a passage in which Wittgenstein examines the concept of "game." When we look at things we call games-- such as card games, ball games, board games, ring around the rosy, twenty questions, and so on-- we may wonder:

What is common to them all?-- Don’t say: "There must be something common, or they would not all be called ‘games’"-- but look and see whether there is anything common to all.-- For if you look at them, you will not see something common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don’t think, but look! Look for example at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that is common is retained but much is lost.-- Are they all ‘amusing’? Compare chess with noughts and crosses. Or is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? Think of patience. In ball games there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared. Look at the parts played by skill and luck; and at the differences between skill in chess and skill in tennis. Think now of games like ring-a-ring-a-roses; here is the element of amusement, but how many other characteristic features have disappeared! And we can go through many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear. And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way.

We find the same kinds of when we look at the central terms we use to define and understand our culture: "corporation," "economics," "political power," "government," "sex," "family," "experiment," "science," "pate in"prayer," "the spiritual," "teacher," "school," and "culture."

(Note: Criticisms of this analysis which employ the distinction between "directly exhibited features" and "relational attributes" are mistaken-- at least in almost all of the cases relevant to social theory. The key terms used to define relational attributes like "the potentiality of a game to be of absorbing non-practical interest to either participant or spectators" are, themselves, family resemblance notions. So the terms they might define, like game," are as well.

Political scientists have expended enormous energy trying to define power. Sociologists have done the same with status. The results have been frustrating insofar as they tried to develop a clear definition that can be stated axiomatically and consistently operationalized. The source of such frustration lies in the structure of these concepts. The concepts are not axiomatic in structure-- their meaning cannot be stated in an axiomatic definition the way Euclid gave the meaning of "straight line." As they are employed by social agents to understand and structure their activity, these notions simply are not straight line concepts.
We can see now not only why the Galilean quest for mathematical theories of social reality has met so much failure but also why in one case, economics, it seems to have met with some success. In most arenas of life, the concepts that social reality are not axiomatizable and so the reality they define cannot be characterized in the neat, quantitative formula of algebra. But there is one arena in which people define reality with numbers and speak the language of mathematics, namely when they are producing and distributing quantities of goods and services. Because business people speak mathematics, economists studying them can and must employ mathematical language to describe and explain their activity.

Other social scientists often hold up economics as a promising example of the kind of Galilean theory they seek in their own fields. This is a fundamental mistake. Economics is "the exception that proves the rule" because the reason that the use of algebraic formulae in it is successful is precisely the same reason why the use elsewhere must fail. Researchers must employ the language of the people they study. In economic activity it is mathematical; elsewhere it is not. Based on economists’ successes, sociologists studying street people should draw this moral: Their theories should employ street talk.

To sum up this chapter: Competent social research requires a participatory understanding. It requires a mastery of the language the community uses to structure its own activities. Competent understanding of that language requires participation in the activities of the community speaking it because it is only through such practice in varying contexts that we can learn to navigate our way about the networks of resemblance and contrast that constitute the meanings of terms. And participation is required for a second and even more important group of reasons as well. Crucial features of the contexts that determine proper usage for terms are non-verbal. Proper assessment of them requires knowledge by acquaintance, expressive understanding, and know-how.

Overall, at this stage, two points should already be clear and a third should follow rather plainly. First, we cannot understand someone’s account of his or her activity in piecemeal bits; the meanings of terms and claims and values are context-dependent, the meanings of sentences are holistic. Second, to understand the ground level elements of people’s views of what they are doing and why, we must acquire non-propositional knowledge (knowledge by acquaintance, expressive understanding, and know-how) which requires participation. These two points can be summed up by saying that to understand the intentional structures of meaning that are constitutive of people’s activity, we must enter into their world.

A third point follows from these. To make peace with others, we need to understand them and their social world by entering into it with them. Peacemaking requires participation in other people’s communities. Until we begin to take part, we cannot even understand what they are doing and why, let alone learn how to reconcile their differences and ours.

To say that a participatory understanding of the language and practice of a community is required for competent understanding is not to say that such understanding is sufficient. A simple participatory understanding does not provide fully adequate descriptions and explanations of social activity. But it does provide the necessary starting point-- the understanding which must be critiqued and revised in ways we are about to consider.
Chapter 12: The Understanding Required for Peace: Critical Participatory Research

One way to solve you problems at home is to leave. One way to eliminate conflict with others is to break off all relations with them. But, in most contexts, the peace we would like to make is not the kind in which we are simply left alone. It is the kind in which we attempt to arrive at an agreement-- the sort of an agreement we might call "an understanding." Such "understandings" in the special sense require understanding in the more inclusive sense. So, to intelligently make peace with others, we need to understand them.

Further, regardless of what we want to do with others, whether it is a matter of swining real estate deals or making war, the better we understand them, the better our chances for success. We seek such understanding day in and day out. The art of acquiring insight into others-- the kind we pursue for our personal ends-- is a basic coping skill in life. The background understanding we require may be rather simple or quite complex. But whether this understanding required is minimal or detailed, when we try to acquire it we start to engage in a kind of social research. In that sense, we are all social researchers.

How should we do such research? How can we best cultivate our understanding of others? A participatory understanding of them on their own terms is a start. But it does not go far enough. Their own understandings of themselves are rarely, if ever, adequate.

People's own understanding of their activity is typically flawed in five sorts of ways. It is vague, implicit, inconsistent, incomplete, and inaccurate. So, as social researchers, we must seek to remedy these flaws in order to adequately understand what people are doing and why. This is true whether our research is aimed to provide us with knowledge of peacemaking, warring, or simple knowledge for knowledge's own sake. However, something surprising and important turns out to be the case. It concerns a relationship between research and certain kinds of peacemaking.

To remedy the five sorts of flaws that infect people’s participatory understanding of themselves, researcher undertake an activity which involves them in making certain kinds of peace between themselves and the people they study. It also involves researchers in making a kind of peace among the people themselves who are studied. In social research, certain kinds of peacemaking are indispensible steps toward understanding. This point has nothing to do with the ethics of research-- as though once we completed our research we were somehow obliged to use it to make peace. The point is that a limited but important kind of peacemaking is an intrinsic element of research itself, a part of its methodology-- even if our interests are purely cognitive.

THE VAGUE AND THE IMPLICIT
People’s self-understandings are always vague or implicit to some degree, and this feature cannot be eradicated. This is a basic feature of general beliefs and knowledge by acquaintance, expressive understanding and know-how. It serves, in part, to explain why participatory understanding is required. But this is not to say that such vague and tacit understanding is a virtue. Often self understandings are vague or implicit in ways that place unnecessary obstacles in the path of an activity.

Police officers may have knowledge by acquaintance of types of disorderly people and disruptive conduct. It may be a knowledge by acquaintance which they have learned from familiarity with paradigm cases and tips from fellow officers. But the researcher wants to understand in as explicit a way as possible, just what the significant features of these paradigms are and what the meaning of these tips and hints is. And the officers themselves may have an interest in trying to acquire more explicit understanding of this sort so they can improve the speed and accuracy of their responses to situations, justify them more readily, and teach new officers to make proper identifications for themselves.

For similar reasons, political orators, lawyers, and arms negotiators seek more definite and articulate accounts of what they are doing and why they are doing it. Because clear and explicit formulation is one of the hallmarks of understanding, researchers must seek these things as well.

In this regard, researchers and their subjects stand in a "win/win" relation to each other. The more clearly and explicitly the subjects of the research understand themselves, the easier the task of the researcher is. The clearer and more explicit the account that the researcher arrives at, the more useful it can be to the subjects themselves. There are, of course, cases in which people have an interest in deceiving themselves or others, a point to which we will return. But apart from these cases, subjects and researchers share in a common interest in understanding. Their differences are not points of conflict between competing agents, they are problems or puzzles to be solved by joint inquiry where each benefits from a furthering of the other’s interests.

The joint character of the inquiry bears emphasis. Each brings something distinctive to it. The subject brings the activity to be understood. The researcher brings a new or different perspective which raises questions the subject might never have asked or which suggests answers the subject might not have thought of proposing. Something rather analogous to this occurs, of course, in studies of natural phenomena. But there, the researcher "interrogates" things by manipulating them. In social research, the interrogation can occur in a literal dialogue. Moreover, it must.

In explicating someone’s practices or values or beliefs, the researcher must propose what seems to be a clearer and more explicit account and then inquire of the subject: "Is this what you are saying and doing?" "Is that what you are really after?" In large part, this is because what gives the agent’s activity its determinacy is the self-understanding with which he or she determines it, the intentional interpretations which make an arm movement a wave to a friend instead of a signal to another motorist. Apart from the cases of deception, if the subjects refuse to adopt the researchers proposed explication, then the researcher is simply wrong-- though tis is not to deny he may be on the right track. Since the researcher
Part III

is trying to explicate the *subjects’* self-understanding and their activity which is structured by it, their assent to the researcher’s account provides a crucial index of its accuracy.

The researcher/subject relation is just like that between a commentator and an author of a text. The commentator may criticize an author’s words, suggest implicit assumptions are being made, diagnose vague passages, and propose clearer and more explicit formulations of what the author is trying to say. But-- again, apart from deception-- the author remains the final authority on what he was trying to do and say and what values he was trying to realize.

This means that in normal cases the researcher and the people she studies are related to each other not as a manipulator to a group of things or "objects" but as one *subject* to another *subject*, as I to thou-- as participant in a dialogue. And it is a dialogue which in its own limited way provides a paradigm of peacemaking. For here human differences are conceived of not as latent conflicts between people with opposed interests but as shared problems to be resolved in mutual agreement.

**INCONSISTENCY**

A second flaw common to self-understanding is incoherence. People often have practices, beliefs or values which are inconsistent with one another. In this respect, they are in conflict with themselves.

A racist may have a practice of seeing blacks as animal-like and treating them as inferiors to be ordered about-- and yet also have a practice of seeing doctors as imposing figures of authority and treating them as superiors to be obeyed. Then, one day, as a draftee in the army, he is placed under the care of a black doctor. He becomes anxious and unsettled. He is forced to respond to conflicting visual cues. Incompatible gestures and actions are elicited. He "cannot believe his own eyes" and does not know whether to look up with respect or look down with a sneer. He is incapable of responding automatically and without hesitation. He remains undecided when he thinks about what to do. He is undecided because he is confused, and confused because the norms governing his own perceptual categories and patterns of gesture are inconsistent in this case.

To take another example, a general formulating nuclear strategy might work with the assumptions that there is no defense against the Soviet’s nuclear weapons *and* that we can win a nuclear war-- and yet find, in the end, that these two beliefs are inconsistent. They cannot both be true. Or a labor leader might commit himself to bringing about import quotas that will, in the long run, raise his people’s wages, increase the number of jobs in their field, and not cause inflation-- and then find that these may be inconsistent goals, since they cannot all be achieved.

Inconsistencies of these sorts are a problem for the people themselves as well as the researchers studying them. The subjects have not made up their minds, they have not decided which of the two logically incompatible practices or beliefs or values are the ones they actually want to adopt. They literally do not know what they are doing. Their activity itself is unsettled and indeterminate. For the researcher, this means that the reality she is studying is itself incoherent and not determinate and
consistent account of what is going on can be offered. So both the researcher and the subjects have an interest in eliminating the incoherence. They have a joint interest in making a kind of peace-- the kind involved in putting an end to conflicts internal to the subjects' own activity.

There will, of course, be a variety of ways in which this can be done. The racist may reform his treatment of blacks, change his manner in dealing with doctors, or introduce a new category-- the black professional-- who is to be dealt with in some third way. The general may decide to drop his belief that a nuclear war can be won or his supposition that no defense is possible. The point is simply that until some revision of this sort is made, the racist and the general and the union officer simply do not know what they are doing or what they believe and value.

Qua social theorist, the researcher has no interest in which way her subjects make up their minds. But she does have a cognitive interest in getting them to make their minds up in one way or another. Her cognitive interest is in getting them to render their activity determinate so it can then be understood in a coherent and determinate way. Metallurgists have an interest in purifying ore so that they have homogenous metals whose properties can then be known. Similarly, the social researcher has an interest in promoting the elimination of internal conflicts in the subjects she studies so that a coherent account can be developed.

This point applies to conflicts internal to communities as well as individuals. The norms by which a community regulates its activity may be incoherent. A classic case is that of the tragic Antigone in the play by Sophocles. She is obliged by kinship to bury her parents properly and yet obliged by citizenship to obey her lord Creon’s order to leave their bodies outside the city walls. Because most of us are involved in multiple roles and multiple sets of institutional norms, such conflicts are a matter of daily difficulty. We find ourselves thrust into situations in which we face incompatible obligations as teacher and friend, or as doctor pledged to promote health at all costs and as a hospital employee under contract to maximize profits.

These conflicting roles place us in relations of opposition not only with ourselves but also with other members of such institutions who are obliged to monitor and enforce the performance of such duties. These are not simply personal conflicts between people who simply differ in their preferences. They are inconsistencies in the corporate norms adopted by the community itself. Antigone’s problem is one which any member of the community might face if placed in her position and one which all do face indirectly as bystanders forced to choose some way of treating her. They must decide whether to make an exception to the norms of kinship or those of citizenship or else revise one or both in some way that will eliminate the inconsistency. Until this is done, the community has not collectively "made up its mind." It has not determined what are the proper norms for judging people in such positions and dealing with them.

The incoherencies in this first group involve conflicting ends. They derive from conflicts in the ways in which the community institutionalizes ends such as family solidarity and civic loyalty or the promotion of health and profit. But incoherence can take a variety of other forms.
Some are only discovered once we begin to look at unexpected cases that come up. Others involve inconsistencies that seem to make virtually every case confusing. Parents lay down rules and then kids discover the rules are inconsistent. Judges are continually confronted with cases where two laws apply and each prescribes the opposite decision. The members of a community share the goal of building trust and decide to all follow a rule of "complete honesty." But then they discover that "complete honesty"-- at least the kind they had in mind-- causes pain, anxiety, and withdrawal.

Other inconsistencies may involve "double binds" that seem to apply to almost every case and make it confusing. A child in the back seat is told: "Shut up and enjoy the trip!" Colleges are required to integrate by using goals but not quotas and they are required to favor the admission of one group without disfavoring the admission of others or practicing "reverse discrimination." Parents may feel they must let their children grow into independent adulthood by making their own decisions and make sure that the right decisions about drugs, sex, and career choices are the ones the child makes. In a very similar way, the leaders of a superpower may find themselves committed to promoting the independence of countries in their sphere of influence and maintaining supremacy in their sphere.

There is a host of other types of inconsistency that can characterize the policies of communities or nations. Many arise because these corporate entities are pressured from within by groups with inconsistent values or goals. The Pentagon dreads getting involved in a war in Central America, the CIA sees the area as a manageable arena for exercising U.S. might, fundamentalist churches want to fight the spread of communism in El Salvador, and Catholics demand that the killing of their missionaries stop. The result is a recipe for inconsistent foreign policy in the area.

Or farmers in Kansas want to sell wheat to the Soviets, machinists in Connecticut want to build weapons for McDonald Aircraft, doctors in Massachusetts want to halt the arms race, and ethnic groups in Wisconsin want to get tough on communism. In this case, as we shall see in Chapter 18, the sources of inconsistency are especially complex and profound. But the reason what they may, it should be clear on the face of it that policy makers in both the Soviet Union and the United States find themselves caught in a web of conflicting goals and norms. They have incentives both to deploy new weapons in order to strengthen their position and make demands on their opponents and to take the initiative in halting the arms race in order to cut its economic cost and the potential danger it brings.

The nuclear arms race is difficult to understand because the participants are operating under conflicting norms. In that sense, they do not themselves know what they are doing. If a Soviet backed army invaded Saudi Arabia, would the United States respond by using tactical nuclear weapons? If so, how would the Soviets respond? No one knows. This is not because the answer is a well kept secret. It is because the norms the superpowers operate under are inconsistent and their own intentions and future actions are indeterminate. This means that the social reality that arms researchers wish to understand is itself indeterminate. To know it more fully, researchers would need to get it to become more fully determinate. Out of a purely cognitive desire to know in an accurate and determinate way, researchers must attempt to formulate more consistent policies and get participants involved to adopt some such set of coherent policies.
Part III

It is important to emphasize that this interest of the researcher is a cognitive one, not a moral interest, and it has important limitations. As regards the researchers’ cognitive interest, it does not matter how the inconsistencies are resolved, it only matters that they are resolved. If our aim is simply to understand the activities of people, a consistent racism or integrationalist view-- or a consistent militarism or pacifism-- will each do equally as well. Each will provide a determinacy to the beliefs and the plans and actions of the people studied. The point is simply that until some such consistency is achieved, the object of the researcher’s inquiry will remain incoherent and indeterminate-- and it will not be an object capable of being fully understood.

The subjects themselves share the researcher’s cognitive interest in consistency. This point is important and basic, but it is easy to overlook. There is a temptation to suppose that consistency is just a preference logicians and theorists have-- a bias other people may not share. And in one kind of case, something like that is true: if I demand that your beliefs be consistent with mine, then I am imposing my values on you. However, self-consistency is a universal value that everyone holds.

The reason is that there is always one person a human never wants to disagree with, namely, himself. This is not because people have an inate dive to obey some law of logic that tells them to only hold consistent beliefs. And it is not as though there is even some single, standard, uniform concept of cinsistency that everyone ought to adopt. Inconsistency is, itself, an open concept-- a family resemblance notion. The central thread of the idea is, roughly, that two inconsistent statements are ones that mean two things that cannot both be true. We cannot believe both; we must make up our minds to beiliev one ght tor the other. But different concepts of meaning, truth, and mind will give us different concepts of precisely what inconsistency involves.

At a week-long conference in Hawaii, a western philosopher talked with an oriental one for days-- with mounting frustration. "You keep contradicting yourself!" he finally shouted. "Well, in a sense, yes..." was the reply. "But you just can’t do that!" There was a pause, and then a smile, and then the oriental philosopher replied: "Oh, but we have been doing this successfully for hundreds of years!" To take another example of which we have already considered in some detail, maieutic reasoners have a different, much more fluid notion of inconsistency than eristic reasoners because they suppose that meaning is holistic, truth is emergent, and mind is communal in character.

But whatever we mean by meaning, truth, and mind, there remains some basic conception of successfully believing something that provides us with a notion of self-consistency that we ourselves are committed to. Inconsistent beliefs are simply those that we cannot-- given our views about the nature of belief-- successfully believe together. We may thoughlessly think we believe both and carelessly say we do but we cannot succeed. Until we choose one or the other we simply have not made up our minds and we do not yet know what we believe at all.

With regard to consistency, the researcher is, again, related to the sunjects being studied in the way a commentator is related to the author of a text. If author voices inconsistent views, we cannot understand her because she does not understand herself. She has not made up her mind as to just what it is that she
holds. As commentators, we can propose alternative ways of rationally reconstructing her views. But unless she adopts one, and until she does, we cannot determine what she really thinks because she does not yet really think anything. She is undecided. The words and deeds of social agents likewise provide a kind of text to be interpreted and understood through explication and rational reconstruction. And the activity of rationally reconstructing such inconsistent views and getting agents to adopt consistent ones constitutes a limited kind of peacemaking which is an intrinsic part of the method of proper social research.

Besides explicit clarity and consistency, two further hall marks of understanding are completeness and accuracy. The ways people understand their own activity are typically deficient in both.

INCOMPLETENESS AND INACCURACY

In trying to understand social reality we want to avoid adopting accounts that are only partial or inaccurate. We want the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Neither is easy to come by.

Partiality is pervasive. When we humans act, our understanding of what we are doing is littered with two sorts of incompleteness. On the one hand, there are physical facts and natural laws that provide the complex physical setting we must interpret and take into account. On the other hand, there are the interpretive activities of other people which we need to understand and deal with. We are continually trying to expand our understanding of both things, and continually falling short in our achievement.

So far as the physical facts and laws go, I need to have at least some minimal understanding in order to make my way about the world at all. When I act, I aim to intervene in nature, to change the course of the physical events. I adopt some view of what the physical facts are and what the physical consequences of my acts will be. But the causes of those facts extend back indefinitely, and the consequences of my acts extend into the future with a similar unknown and indefinite ramification.

This is as true of the corporate actions of a community as it is true of the individual deeds of a single person. To understand either fully, we want to push two questions as far as we can: 1. Why is this being done? And 2. What is being done? The first leads us to look for the causes of the facts taken into account by the actors. A tribe is migrating because of crop failures. Very well then, what caused the crops to fail? Climatic shifts? The activities of new parasites? But then what caused these?

The second question leads us to look for the unintended consequences of actions-- the aspects of what is being done that were not "meant." What, for example, are the effects that practices of monoculture have on the soil? What consequences do these effects have for the nutrient cycles and other aspects of the physical environment? We may be able to find out what people are attempting to do without pursuing such questions, but we will need to pursue them at length if we want to know in full what it is they are actually doing.

Such questions arise-- and call for explanations drawing on natural science-- even when the physical
environment is artificial. Whether we are in a prison, a factory, or a classroom, we will find that noise, heat, and humidity affect people’s moods and behaviors. Prisoners, workers, and students are not unaware of these. But when a riotous activity breaks out and we subsequently try to find out why, we are led to look back at the earlier, unknown physical events that made the machinery break down or made the moisture accumulate. Similarly, if people smoke in a conference room or burn high sulphur coal in heating plants, a full understanding of what they are doing should include and account of the physical consequences of these things-- consequences of which they may be unaware.

It is obvious that we will never understand all these causes and consequences, but it is just as obvious that the more we understand, the better. One of the tasks of social researchers is to seek complete understanding in just these ways-- ways in which the self-understanding of the research subjects will typically be glaringly deficient.

So far as the social setting of our action goes, we are in the same boat. It is a boat balanced on the tip of an iceberg extending far beneath the water level of our understanding. We cannot make our way far in the world without at least some minimal knowledge of the intentions of others and the customs and institutions of the communities with which we deal. But a social researcher seeking to fully understand what we are doing (and why) needs to explore the iceberg of social reality. To understand the complex network of interchanges occurring when Cuban immigrants riot in Miami or strike breakers attack union members at a Kentucky coal mine, an account of one person’s-- or one group’s-- side of the story does not suffice. A critically refined holistic and participatory understanding of other people’s activities is also required.

This point is basic and obvious. But in trying to take it into account, people commonly make two fundamental sorts of errors. One error appears often as the "common sense" of people who are not professional researchers. It is the mistake of supposing that every story has two sides. An informal study was made by former ambassador Harlan Cleveland while he was working at the state department. He examined all the issues that came across his desk in the course of one representative week. He found that the average issue had not 2 sides, but 5.6 of them. Perhaps failure to note how many sides a story can have is common because of a money fetish. We say "every coin has two sides," and then generalize. The saying ignores the obvious fact that if you look closely at a newly minted coin you find that it has edges all over and a wondrous multiplicity of angles. The events of our lives are no different. What we want is an understanding that is not merely bi-partial, but im-partial-- an understanding that grasps each part of the story and fits it into a larger whole.

The second error is one often made by professional researchers. It consists in the mistake of supposing that impartiality is a matter offering value free explanations in a sanitized terminology. Neutrality is sought by refusing to use the value laden terms employed by the people being studied. So researchers speak of "incidents" rather than brawls or battles and talk of "body counts" rather than dead soldiers and corpses of children.

We have already seen that such efforts at sanitizing language are a mistake. They keep social theory
emotionally sterile only by avoiding bringing it into contact with the reality it ought to describe and explain. Here the point to note is that the completeness of understanding we should seek in doing social research does not require sterility in order to be "objective." It requires, instead, a synthesis of multiple partial perspectives in order to achieve the impartiality or "multi-partiality" that can give us a fuller understanding.

The synthesis of multiple perspectives leads to a kind of structural understanding of social interactions that goes well beyond a mere clumping together of partial accounts. In a sense, if economists only sought impartiality in their research, they might simply compile the accounts of the various workers and capitalists and consumers engaged in transactions. But if economists aim at completeness of understanding in a fuller sense, then they will try to determine what are the systematic social antecedents and consequences of individuals’ actions.

If one seller in a market dominated by a handful of oligopolies lowers prices, what decisions does this motivate others to make? If all lower prices, how does this change the interests and decisions of investors and consumers? Much of economic theory is, in effect, a kind of systematic calculus for understanding structural patterns in the ways in which changes in the marketplace alter the motives relevant to people’s decisions and lead them-- if they are economically rational-- to alter their decisions.

Economic "laws" differ from the laws of physics because they only characterize how agents ought to behave if those agents adopt a certain type of rationality. Such "laws" do not describe how people must act. Economic theories provide systematic predictions of social consequences that can be expected, rather than natural effects that are inevitable. Yet, because participants in the economic system are in fact usually socialized to reason and decide in economically rational ways, these "laws" provide a much more complete insight into the dynamics of the marketplace than individual economic agents can, themselves, normally offer.

In sum, researchers who undertake to develop a critical participatory understanding of social activity should seek completeness, then, by studying the physical causes of the natural setting in which people act as well as the physical consequences of those actions. And they should likewise seek completeness by aiming at an impartial understanding of the social interactions as well as a structural understanding of the social antecedents and social consequences of actions.

In seeking completeness of understanding, the social researcher finds herself involved in activities of peacemaking again-- in two sorts of ways earlier discussed. On the one hand, she stands in a win/win relation with the subjects insofar as they themselves seek more complete understanding so as to increase the efficacy of their actions. On the other hand, she has a (limited) cognitive interest in reconciling inconsistencies between partial views of different participants. If they have conflicting ways of perceiving and defining actors and deeds, and conflicting ways of responding, then the characteristics of the people and their acts remain indeterminate. To illustrate this, consider a contrast.

First take the case of a biennial negotiation between union officials and corporation officers. In such a
Part III

In normal cases, the participants usually understand each other rather thoroughly-- they are going through the moves of a complex game or ritual familiar to each side. People will not, of course, usually lay all their cards on the table at the start. But each side knows what sort of cards are there to be played and what the import of each move in the ritual is. In contrast, consider a case in which the people involved have fundamentally different views about what the negotiation is about. Suppose they differ as well in their perceptions of each other’s motivations and actions. What one intends is not what the other observes. Perhaps the U.S. State Department is trying to negotiate with some Iranian students. Or perhaps two spouses are trying to reconcile very fundamental differences. In such cases, it is difficult for a researcher to say who is doing what because there is a lack of shared conventions which the subjects themselves can use to define their own activity.

I am having a fight with my spouse. Lots of different issues are brought up and the argument becomes agonizingly overheated. I try to be a good sport and end it all with a handshake or a hug so "the game of marriage can play on." But she understands marital disputes by analogy to the Catholic doctrines of sin and redemption-- not by analogy to sports. So my gesture of a kiss or a hug cannot come out as I intended.

In looking at me she sees the gesture as that of a penitent kneeling before a priest. I see my own gesture as something like a competitor’s handshake which is simply intended to let bygones be bygones. So she will not respond as I expect and I will be uncertain as to how to complete the act. She will be in the same boat. My gesture comes off as neither penitence nor egalitarian reconciliation per se. It is a bit of both, a bit of neither, and something more as well-- something yet to be defined.

In trying to understand such action, the social researcher has a cognitive interest in reconciling our views so as to make acts like this more determinate and intelligible. The point applies to differences in ways people like my wife and I view verbal insults, slaps, and intensive silence. The researcher has a cognitive interest in pursuing a limited form of peacemaking-- the limited sort involved in getting us to agree on the ways in which we disagree. Only when we settle that difference can we know what we are doing to each other and give our actions a definiteness that makes them determinate, intelligible objects of cognition.

Here again, the subjects of the research are, at least in normal cases, in a win/win relation with the researcher. For they themselves seek to know what they are doing just as much as the researcher does. It my be, of course, that the most fundamental desire of each spouse is to hurt the other. But even then, they will want to eliminate conflicts in their understanding of each other’s words and deeds. Each will want to understand the other as well as possible-- in order to be as effective as they can in realizing their sadistic ends.

This is true, at least, in normal cases. But "in normal cases" is, perhaps not quite the right way to qualify the point. Clearly some sort of qualification is needed, however, because there are important sorts of cases in which researchers and subjects do not share a common interest in promoting the understanding of what is being done and why.
People can have an interest in deceiving others or themselves. When they do, their relation to the researcher is one of conflict. The case of those trying to deceive others is clear. The conflicts of interest between the researcher and the liar or propagandist are rather straightforward, at least at the start. (Once each begins to try to manipulate, then things can become rather complex.) The researcher wants to know what is actually going on; the deceiver does not want it-- or at least all of it-- to be known by others.

The relation of the self-deceiver to the researcher is usually more ambivalent. This is because self-deception is ambivalent in essence. Consider a working class conservative who deceives himself about his chances for upward mobility. Or take the case of a national security officer (with past and projected future ties to corporate interests) who deceives herself about her motives in promoting a new weapons system. Each is in the peculiar position of both knowing the truth and not knowing it. If both simply knew it, then they would not have deceived themselves. If they did not know, then they would not have deceived themselves-- for deceit presupposes knowledge of that about which we lie.

This split in awareness is usually coupled with a split in interests. The working middle class conservative may be aware at some level that he stands to gain much-- in the long run-- by coming to terms with the fact that his chances for upward mobility are insignificant, Yet he may also be aware at some level that the pain involved in doing this is-- in the short run-- great, and perhaps the effort is not worthwhile.

In a case like this, the researcher may find that her diagnosis of the self-deception meets resistance from the subject and yet that he, at some level, also acknowledges its truth. (One may find insistence in his words, but resignation in his eyes.

On the other hand, lying to oneself may be quite beneficial in some cases. The national security officer may lose much and gain little by admitting to herself that her efforts at the Senate Hearing on nuclear weapons are motivated by interests in her own future employment opportunities rather than concerns over recent developments in Soviet armaments.

In both cases, the researcher faces a very difficult problem. To some extent, a diagnosis can be formulated in terms of observations of the subject and verified independently of the subject’s assent. There are a variety of ways in which we can tell when people are kidding themselves, including characteristic types of gestures, postures, emotional responses, inconsistencies in words and deeds and discontinuities in reasoning. But it is very difficult to say exactly how they are kidding themselves. For their own understanding of what they are doing is tacit-- you cannot purposefully and explicitly lie to yourself unless you have a genuinely split personality of the pathological sort. So the diagnosis of a self-deception involves the explication of some tacit understanding. And this, as we saw earlier, requires the assent of the subject for its full confirmation-- or perhaps it would be better to say that such assent is required for its fully determinate and explicit instantiation or actualization. Tacit understandings and intentions cannot be fully known because they are not fully determinate.

This means that the researcher has a cognitive interest in eliminating self-deception. Psychotherapists cannot fully understand their patients until they have cured them. Social theorists cannot fully understand
the false consciousness of a class, sex, or ethnic group until they get its members to raise thei
consciousness. Just as metal ore freed of random impurities is a more intelligible object of cognition,
similarly people liberated from mental illness or false consciousness are more intelligible subjects of
research. They are more knowledgeable.

Deception of self or others is a species of a more general type of inadequacy in research subjects’ self-
understanding, namely: inaccuracy. Other sorts of inaccuracy-- arising from errors or shortcomings in
observation, judgement, or reasoning-- are ones the subjects themselves have an interest in eliminating.
With the researcher, they share an interest in learning what these inaccuracies are, how they have arisen,
and how they can be prevented in the future. In that regard, this inadequacy is like the other four we have
considered.

The criteria we have been discussing separately apply conjointly. The webs of interpretations people use
to understand their own activities usually have all five flaws we have discussed. In part, this is because
such webs are networks of holistically related interpretations in which flaws in any one part inform-- or,
rather, misinform-- the other parts. But in many cases, a particular focus of our thought or our response
to a situation is infected directly with all five flaws at once. This is perhaps most often the case with the
responses we tend to classify as emotions.

Someone honks a horn or shouts at us and in anger we honk or holler back. Or one nation’s ambassador
performs the diplomatic equivalent of shouting and the ambassador of another answers in kind. We are
vague about why we are angry and what we intend to accomplish with the shout. We are perhaps tacitly
acting as though we believed that no one should ever shout like that and that shouting only escalates
irrational confrontation and so, in accusation, we-- inconsistently-- shout back. We have only a partial
understanding of why they honked or hollered and how they will interpret our response. And we
inaccurately believe they did it deliberately to cause us pain or humiliation-- rather than as a response to
their own blind panic or as an attempt to warn us of an oncoming collision of cars or military forces.

In cases such as this, a more adequate understanding will alter our behavior significantly. And
researchers who believe they have a more adequate understanding can put their theory to the test by
trying to persuade people to adopt their account-- and seeing if the behavior is altered.

So far, then, the upshot of our discussion in Part III has been this. To make peace with people, we need to
understand them. To understand them, we need to engage in a holistic and participatory research which
treats social reality as structured in purposive, value-laden, institutional and non-axiomatizable ways.
Further, our research must be a critical participatory one. It must seek to remedy the inadequacies of
participants’ own self-understandings which are vague, tacit, inconsistent, partial and inaccurate. It must
seek to do so through explications, rational reconstructions, elaborations that yield completeness, and
critiques of inaccuracies that result from deception or error.

As researchers undertaking such inquiry, we find ourselves-- except in cases of deception-- in win/win
relations with the people we are studying. Further, we have a cognitive interest in the kind of
peacemaking involved in eliminating conflicts in their own practices, beliefs, and values as well as conflicts between their own understandings of social reality and those of the people with whom they interact. In the first respect, our cognitive activity is intrinsically peaceable. In the second, we find peacemaking (of a limited sort) is an intrinsic part of our cognitive enterprise. Even if our extra-cognitive interests are those of warmakers rather than peacemakers, we find that the limited forms of peacemaking specified above are an integral part of the proper method of social research itself. In cases of self-deception, we have a cognitive interest in liberating the people we study from their mental illness or false consciousness. (In cases in which they wish to deceive others, our cognitive interests place us in conflict with their practical interests.)

A key test of the adequacy of an account offered by a social researcher is the success she finds in getting subjects to assent to the account offered and adopt it in practice. An explication or reconstruction of someone’s activity may be resisted by them, especially insofar as they are engaged in self-deception. But apart from this adoption, the account remains tentative at best. For the structures of the agents’ actions are provided by their own self-understandings. It is the agents’ intentions that constitute the social reality that the researcher seeks to describe and explain.

This last point applies to the book you are reading now. The book aims to offer a kind of holistic and participatory understanding of the practices connected with peace. If the explication, reconstruction, elaboration, and critique offered in these pages is rejected by readers such as yourself, this indicates the account is either false or has been misunderstood.

The account of social research and understanding which we have developed here differs markedly from the Galilean view which has dominated mainstream social science. Correlative to this difference in views of understanding is a difference in views of the nature of rational action. As we will see in Part IV, the distinctive, emerging views of understanding on the one hand and action on the other provide a framework for developing a conception of peace as a positively distinguished activity.

The two are closely related to one another. Mohandas K. Ghandi did extraordinary amounts of patient research in the course of his satyagraha campaigns, but his inquiries were not searches for Galilean understanding of the sort aimed at by contemporary social scientists. And the research he did yielded a different approach to action-- one which was distinctively non-instrumental in character.