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 JOHN VEIT-WILSON'S NOTES
 ON CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS AND MEASURES OF POVERTY,
 ON INCOME ADEQUACY AND ON MINIMUM INCOME STANDARDS.

John Veit-Wilson asserts his moral right to be identified as the author of this work. If you want to quote the page numbers on which passages cited below originally appeared in print, you will have to find the journals in which they were published.

ECLECTICISM, NAIVETY AND PACKAGE-DEAL THINKING IN SOCIAL RESEARCH.

This note refers to a couple of the problems affecting social policy research, writing and teaching which can diminish their explanatory credibility: the eclecticism of much social policy writing when it draws on more than any one disciplinary paradigm, and the tendency of some authors to indulge misleadingly in 'package-deal' thinking.

1. NAIVETY IN SOCIAL RESEARCH.

Notes from a review by Lucy Mair [in New Society 28 January 1965 pp 27-8] of Max Gluckman [ed][1964], Closed Systems and Open Minds: the limits of naivety in social anthropology, Oliver and Boyd, London.

NAIVETY is how much of the findings of other specialisations which bear on the phenomena you observe can be taken for granted (or how much you can disregard the finer problems and the qualifications and reservations), so that you can set limits to your own field and not have to follow up everything you make use of.

Different disciplines deal with the same events but look for relationships of different kinds, different aspects of the same social reality. You must isolate and mark out particular aspects to make progress. Are you then neglecting aspects which are so closely related to your problem that to disregard them vitiates your answers?

- CIRCUMSCRIPTION means demarcating the field you are working in.
- INCORPORATION means the taking for granted of agreed data that need not be explained in this context.
- ABRIDGEMENT means summarising and simplifying the conclusions of other specialists.
- INCORPORATION and ABRIDGEMENT together are COMPRESSION.

Naive assumptions are to be allowed in those fields which we have decided are peripheral to our enquiries, but only there. The authors illustrate unjustified naivety by Freud's writings on sociology in which he treated it as "nothing other than applied psychology", or the arguments about the validity of Oedipus theory in a matrilineal society where authority is not exercised by the father.

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2. PACKAGE-DEAL THINKING.

A Fox [1979], "A note on industrial relations pluralism", in Sociology, 13/1, pp 106-9:

We must distinguish –

- [1] *a priori* VALUES from
- [2] refutable conceptions of FACT, and from
- [3] arguable STRATEGIES.

The connections are contingent not logical, and it is PACKAGE-DEAL THINKING to assume they must be conflated.

Similarly, G Smith and N Stockman [1972], "Some suggestions for a sociological approach to the study of government reports", in Sociological Review 20, pp 59-77:

We must distinguish –

- [1] a description of the way things are = DIAGNOSIS, from
- [2] an account of the way they should be = POLICY OBJECTIVES, and from
- [3] TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATIONS or strategies to bring about the policy objectives.

You must examine each factor separately and never accept authors' packages uncritically even if you agree with their conclusions.
