

History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences
(Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987)

Available at: www.amazon.com

Translation in Italian: *Storia e filosofia delle scienze sociali* (Rome: Lucarini, 1990)

From the Jacket:

“This is a rich, energetic and enjoyable book...it is thought-provoking, engaging and sympathetic.” Alan Ryan, *New Society*.

“Manicas has brought together in a brilliant synthesis the many recent strands of constructive criticism concerning the social sciences. The should have an enormous impact on both theory and method.” Rom Harré, University of Oxford.

This ambitious critical history of the variety of the disciplines we group together as social sciences argues that the defining characteristic of social science, both historically and in the present, is ideology. Based originally on a flawed idea of science, the ‘social sciences’ have incorporated and refined a set of assumptions about the nature of state and society, assumptions which have been institutionalized with the growth of modern universities.

A History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences is in three main parts. It deals first with the history of certain key ideas from the early modern period (assessing thinkers from Hobbes and Marx to Hegel, Weber and Kuhn), before exploring the institutional and social features which have shaped the emergence of modern social science, concluding by suggesting an alternative realist philosophy for the future.

Rigorous and scholarship and engaging in perception, the book offers a brilliant combination of wide-ranging historical scholarship and a firm location in the current theoretical dilemmas of the social sciences.

Excerpts from reviews:

“Peter Manicas has written an exciting book. Some of his conclusions, such as those concerning the historical process of specialization in the social sciences, are bound to have a lasting influence on our conceptions of the social sciences.” Sven Olaf Hansson, Uppsala University, *Theoria*, LIV (1988).

“For the student of the history *or* the philosophy of the social sciences, this book is essential reading. Manicas brings to the historical subject matter a breadth and depth of perspective that is to be found in few writers. Apart from constituting a strong argument for realism, this work provides important and novel insights into the development of the social sciences.” Craig Dilworth, *Epistemologia*, XII (1990).

“Within the ranks of skeptics of mainstream, quantitative social science is the philosopher Peter T. Manicas. His wide-ranging *A History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences* sketches the historical process by which American universities and learned societies came to be dominated by a social science resoundingly more technocratic than its European counterpart. The critique of American social science from the humanistic left is a venerable project, but Manicas gives it a distinctive twist. Many who share Manicas’s political perspective have been attracted to relativist and anti-realist epistemologies for their ability to ‘unmask’ sciences that serve the interests of particular classes or groups under the cover of ‘objectivity’....This is not at all Manicas’s strategy. Rather, he defends realist epistemology as the key theoretical recourse in the intellectual’s campaign to overturn the political order with which the survey researchers and behaviorists have made their peace.” David A. Hollinger, *Michigan Quarterly Review*).

“...Peter T. Manicas has produced an ambitious book....The book is not easy reading, but Manicas knows his subject and has interesting and insightful things to say....Historians will probably find Manicas’s treatment of Marx and Engels, Ranke and Weber particularly interesting; certainly anyone who thinks of Ranke as an empiricist or whose view of Weber derive from Talcott Parsons’s interpretation will find considerable food for thought in the interpretation presented here...Readers may not be persuaded, but they will be challenged on points that need challenging. What more can a philosopher do for social sciences—or historians? Murray Murphey, University of Pennsylvania, *Journal of American History* (December, 1988). Entire review available on-line: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-8723%28198812%2975%3A3%3C890%3A%3E2.0.CO%3B2-3>

“In order to be successful, a critical history must not only provide a plausible narrative of an endeavor’s deformation, it must explain itself. ...Reflexivity is a crucial element in critical history...These reflections were prompted by Peter Manicas, *A History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, because the book is an excellent example of critical history... In general, Manicas acts as if there is a tight fit between metatheory and theory in the social sciences. In fact, he says that ... ‘inconsequence of their relatively late beginnings as “sciences,” the practices of mainstream social science have long since been constituted by [the positivist philosophy of science.] Unfortunately, it is not clear from Manicas’s book this is the case.” Bryan Fay, Wesleyan University, *History and Theory*, XXVII (1988).

“A splendid book, both historically and philosophically, and a must for those who wish to understand the attempt to remarry the humane and the rationale.” T.J. Knight, Colorado State University, *Choice*, June 1988.

“This book is, in the author’s own words, ‘embarrassingly ambitious’ (p. vi). It attempts to sketch nothing less than the post-medieval history of a highly contestable idea—‘science.’ It focuses on the institutions, practices and discourses (principally texts) which have most crucially contributed to establishing what we today take the ‘social sciences.’ ...”

“A deep moral vision informs this study. A (if not *the*) principle moral of Professor Manicas’s historical sketch is that ‘the modern social sciences have been, unwittingly or not, defenders of the *status quo*; (p. 276)... Despite this history, ‘social science is potentially *liberating*’ (*ibid.*). But, the human sciences can be liberating disciplines, humanizing practices, only if they empower people to see that ‘while social reality is real enough, it is not like unchanging nature, but is just that which is sustained by human activities, activities regarding which human have the *only say*’ (*ibid.*). This means, in effect, empowering human beings to see themselves as “causal agents” and as such, beings ‘capable of re-fashioning society in the direction of greater humanity, freedom, and justice’ (p. 277). Vincent Colapietro, Pennsylvania State University, *Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy*, Newsletter.

See also, John Wilson, “Post-Modern Theory,” a Review of Anthony Giddens and Jonathan Turner, *Social Theory Today* and Manicas, *A History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences*. Wilson argues that there is “a political subtext to Manicas’ book and an implied critique of the edited volume.”

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094-3061%28198809%2917%3A5%3C706%3APT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C>.