

Current Comments®

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*Social Science Quotations—A New Volume
of a Famous Encyclopedia Edited by
David L. Sills and Robert K. Merton*

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A new volume of the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* has just been published.¹ This new volume, number 19 of the set, is devoted to memorable quotations drawn from the social sciences and social thought in general. Volumes 1 through 17 of the *Encyclopedia* were published in 1968. Volume 18, a *Biographical Supplement*, was published in 1979.

David L. Sills was the sole editor of the earlier volumes and is senior editor of this volume. His coeditor is Robert K. Merton, University Professor Emeritus at Columbia University. Longtime readers of *Current Contents*® will recognize that Merton is a close friend and much admired colleague.²

David L. Sills

Having taken his doctorate at Columbia University, Sills soon became a distinguished sociologist in his own right. He served as director of research at the Columbia Bureau of Applied Social Research during the 1950s and early 1960s, overseeing some of its notable research in fields ranging from mass communications to health care, education, and bureaucracies engaged in public service.

Sills's book, *The Volunteers: Means and Ends in a National Organization*,³ helped redirect the massive research and patient care programs of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, better known as the "March of Dimes." Later, he served as executive associate at the Social Science Research Council in New York City for some 15 years, retiring with emeritus status in 1989.

Merton has described Sills's many contributions to the social sciences and social



Photo by Richard Kuzman

David L. Sills

policy as "varied," "comprehensive," and "consequential."⁴

Sills's recent work has focused on domestic nuclear energy, particularly as it relates to questions of risks and impacts stemming from the 1979 Three Mile Island accident. He also has been a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences, associate director and then director of the Demographic Division of the Population Council, and a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation.

We have included below a sizable excerpt from the introduction to the *Encyclopedia* volume of quotations written by Sills and Merton. Bob, of course, has been a major force in modern sociology. Acclaiming him as both scientist and humanist, the trustees at Columbia University this year created the Robert K. Merton Professorship in the Social



Photo by Sandra Szil

Robert K. Merton

Sciences in honor of his 50-year career at the university.⁵ His name thus joins those of Lionel Trilling, Jacques Barzun, and Wm. Theodore de Bary, who have been similarly honored.

Robert K. Merton

Now 80, Merton has been showered with awards during his lifetime. The holder of more than 20 honorary degrees both here and abroad, two dozen additional honors include the Bernal Award (1982), a MacArthur Prize Fellowship (1983-1988), and membership in the National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Merton has significantly influenced my life and work, particularly in the development of the *Science Citation Index*® and, especially, the *Social Sciences Citation Index*®. He has served as an editorial adviser to ISI® since 1968. My personal acquaintance with him, however, goes back to 1962. Indeed, my affection for him is reflected in my youngest son's name—Alexander Merton Garfield, now six years of age.

A native Philadelphian, Merton began his academic career at Temple University. He earned his PhD at Harvard, then taught there while beginning the research that did much to found the sociology of science. He also taught briefly at Tulane, moving

on to Columbia in 1941, where he has remained.

The Matthew Effect

Readers familiar with my 1979 book, *Citation Indexing: Its Theory and Application in Science, Technology, and Humanities*,⁶ may recall that Merton wrote the foreword. In it, he touched on the notion of "the Matthew effect," or the tendency of success in science to breed more success. The new *Encyclopedia* volume contains this quotation from Merton's work:

[The] complex pattern of the misallocation of credit for scientific work must quite evidently be described as 'the Matthew effect,' for, as will be remembered, the Gospel According to St. Matthew puts it this way:

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Put in less stately language, the Matthew effect consists of the accruing of greater increments of recognition for particular scientific contributions to scientists of considerable repute and the withholding of such recognition from scientists who have not yet made their mark.¹ (p. 160)

Little Science, Big Science

In 1986, Merton and I collaborated⁷ on the foreword to a new edition of Derek Price's *Little Science, Big Science*,⁸ first published in 1963. This new edition, entitled *Little Science, Big Science...and Beyond*,⁹ includes several additional papers by Price. Derek John de Solla Price is often called the father of scientometrics, the quantitative analysis of science and scientific development. The book did much to elucidate the calculus of science.

One of Price's quotations from the *Encyclopedia*:

[Some groups of scientists constitute] invisible colleges in the same sense as did those first unofficial pioneers who later banded together to form the Royal Society in 1660.... They give each man status in the form of approbation from his peers,

they confer prestige, and, above all, they effectively solve a communication crisis by reducing a large group to a small select one.—*Little Science, Big Science* (1963) 1986:76.—Price adopted and extended Robert Boyle's seventeenth-century term 'invisible college' to designate an informal collective of closely interacting scientists.¹ (p. 192)

There are too many books by Merton to list here. In theoretical sociology, one of his most influential works is *Social Theory and Social Structure*, which has had three editions and some 30 printings. In it, he observes, "if true art consists in concealing all signs of art, true science consists in revealing its scaffolding as well as its finished structure."¹⁰ His classic study, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*,¹¹ is still the standard for research on the rise of modern science.

Merton's Concepts and Neologisms

Among a host of concepts and terms stemming from Merton are the self-fulfilling prophecy, manifest and latent functions, specified ignorance, potentials of relevance, opportunity structure, disciplined eclecticism, accumulation of advantage, obliteration by incorporation, strategic research site, patterned misunderstandings, self-exemplifying ideas and practices, the fallacy of the last word, organized skepticism, and oral publication.¹²

One of his best known works, of course, is *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript*,¹³ fondly referred to as *OTSOG*. The reader will recall that Isaac Newton once modestly wrote to Robert Hooke that "if I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." In this parody, Merton, masquerading as Tristram Shandy, tracks down the origins and development of Newton's famous aphorism, an adventure that exposes the reader along the way to the

history of science, philosophy, literature, music, religion, economics, sociology, and psychology.

The *Encyclopedia* is not the only recent publishing event for Merton. A second edition of *The Focused Interview: A Manual of Problems and Procedures*¹⁴ came out last year. This is a book by Merton, Marjorie Fiske, and Patricia L. Kendall that was first published in 1956 and which has long been out of print. However, it continued to circulate among students in progressively blurrier photocopies and has been described as "a classic in the field" of mass media and public opinion. It introduced the concept of "focus group" to survey and market researchers.

Social Sciences Quotations

The quotations in the social sciences *Encyclopedia* are listed alphabetically by author. They are followed by a bibliography and a 108-page index arranged alphabetically by subject. Each subentry in the index is followed by the author's name and the number of the indexed quotation. An example: "self-fulfilling prophecy: a false definition of situation evoking behavior that makes originally false conception come true. Merton: 2."¹ (p. 415)

Financial support for the volume is acknowledged from the Eugene Garfield, Joseph H. Hazen, Andrew W. Mellon, Russell Sage, Robert Schalkenbach, and Alfred P. Sloan foundations.

By reprinting a large portion of the introduction to this volume, we hope that readers can get a sense of its unusual and pithy perspective on quotations in the social sciences. It would have been fun to determine the most influential, indeed most cited of these quotations, but that's a subject for some future bibliometrician.

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*Scientific development depends in part on a process of non-incremental or revolutionary change. Some revolutions are large, like those associated with the names of Copernicus, Newton, or Darwin, but most are much smaller, like the discovery of oxygen or the planet Uranus. The usual prelude to changes of this sort is, I believe, the awareness of anomaly, of an occurrence or set of occurrences that does not fit existing ways of ordering phenomena. The changes that result therefore require "putting on a different kind of thinking-cap," one that also transforms the order exhibited by some other phenomena, previously unproblematic.—Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension*, 1977. From Volume 19.*

**Excerpt from the Introduction to the International Encyclopedia of the
Social Sciences. Volume 19. Social Science Quotations
David L. Sills and Robert K. Merton, Editors**

The volume has been prepared to meet an evident need not met in the preceding volumes of the *Encyclopedia* or in the general reference literature on the social sciences. Although the *Encyclopedia* contains some 800 scholarly biographies (and appended bibliographies) of social scientists, many do not quote their writings at all while the rest quote only scattered passages from them. Yet we know from the frequent use of quotations in scientific as well as literary writings that summaries and paraphrases typically fail to capture the full force of formulations that have made them memorable. After all, that is why we quote rather than paraphrase. That is why most of us would hesitate to try improving upon William James's imagery of habit as "the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most conservative agent" or upon John Maynard Keynes's observation that "practi-

cal men, who believe themselves quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist." Clearly, it is not alone their substance but also the words in which they are expressed that lead passages such as these to endure through repeated quotation.

There are, of course, many books of quotations but none, like this one, focused on the social sciences, broadly conceived. This wide-ranging scope has meant that the volume could not possibly include quotations from all the scholars of authority and consequence in both the long historical past of social thought and in the vastly expanded present of the social sciences. It was not even possible to include quotations from all 800 or so scholars whose biographies appear in the *Encyclopedia*, let alone from many of the vastly enlarged numbers of contemporary

social scientists of the first rank. This limitation held particularly for those styles of scientific work whose undoubted importance rests in research formulations not readily reformulated in quotable prose.

From the start, also, it was evident that a volume of quotations could in no sense serve as a comprehensive collection of the basic ideas and formulations of the various social sciences. This is emphatically *not* a one-volume summary of the *Encyclopedia* or of the enormous body of new knowledge acquired in the nearly quarter-century since the *Encyclopedia* was first published. Nor, of course, do the quotations serve to summarize the writings of the authors included in the volume. This is typically and conspicuously the case where limitations of space and quotability of contributions have led to very few quotations from even major contributors to their field, but it holds also for those eminently quotable figures who, much quoted from generation to generation, are cited in relative detail. The roster of such figures includes Malinowski, Sapir, and Lévi-Strauss in anthropology; Adam Smith, Jevons, Keynes, and Schumpeter in economics; Ibn Khaldún, Gibbon, and Macaulay in history; Hobbes, Locke, Machiavelli, and Rousseau in political thought; Freud, James, Jung, and G.H. Mead in psychology; Tocqueville, Durkheim, Simmel, and Max Weber in sociology; and Holmes, Pollock and Maitland, and Cardozo in the law. To these are added such monumental social thinkers as Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Marx, and Pareto, who are enduringly quoted in a variety of disciplines. The notion that one, two, or, for that matter, ten pages of quotations could convey the essentials of their thought is, of course, absurd, but the considerable arrays of quotations do serve to make some of their most memorable formulations easily accessible within their immediate contexts.

To provide such ready access to both quotations and their contexts, we have departed from practices prevailing in general books of quotations in two principal respects. First, to provide some immediate contexts, we have often reproduced fairly extensive passages in which the notable succinct quotations are embedded. And second, we have provided exact scholarly references to the source of

every quotation, always indicating the date of the first appearance of a quoted passage and, when in point, the later more accessible or corrected source from which the quotation was actually drawn. A short reference giving the precise page or paragraph of its source is appended to each quotation; the complete reference is provided in the cumulative Bibliography. Of obvious use to readers coming upon quotations new to them, exact references may also prove useful for swiftly locating the more familiar quotations. By leading readers back to the sources, such detailed references can help them place even extended quotations in their larger contexts. In this way, a book of quotations can extend an open invitation to the further reading or re-reading of the original texts, beyond the quotations themselves.

As will become evident, the volume draws chiefly upon writings that constitute the historical core of the social sciences and social thought, those works with staying power often described as the "classical texts"; most of their authors wrote well; most of them wrote voluminously; and their ideas have had a formative impact upon subsequent thinking in their field. A large number of quotations are drawn from these classical texts, not because the editors are Marxists or Weberians or Jamesians or Freudians or Keynesians or whatever, but because they contain *memorable ideas memorably expressed*. Both consequential and memorable, these authors have been quoted over the generations, entering into the collective memory of social scientists and at times diffusing into popular thought and into the vernacular as well.

In selecting quotations, we have gone some distance beyond the goal of supplementing the biographical articles in the *Encyclopedia*. There are a good many quotations from classical authors—Gibbon and Voltaire, for example—who, during the behavioral-science heyday of the 1960s, were identified as "literary" historians and thus were not included as biographical subjects. We have happily reversed these earlier editorial decisions. We have drawn upon a much wider range of authors and quotations, generally with the object of highlighting some social science idea, theme, or general find-

ing. Moreover, since this is a volume for ready reference, we have also included some quotations from the social sciences and social thought that, though now widely questioned in substance, retain an enduring fame or notoriety.

In the effort to enlarge the scope of the volume, we have included quotations on society and the social sciences drawn from the writings of poets, novelists, dramatists, philosophers, political figures, and revolutionaries along with physicists, biologists, and mathematicians. To take a few examples, there are selections from Walt Whitman and W.H. Auden; Jane Austen and Dostoyevski; Shakespeare and G.B. Shaw; Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Wittgenstein; and from the public speeches of Lincoln, Churchill, and Martin Luther King, Jr. These departures from the social sciences, narrowly defined, occupy only a small fraction of the volume but, we believe, serve an important reference function. Since this is not a book of general quotations, we have allowed ourselves only a few quotations of this kind and, perhaps more than any other aspect of this volume, their selection reflects the tastes and preferences of the editors.

Some of the quotations in the volume have had such extensive influence for so long that they have become part of the culture with the identity of their original authors no longer given and, in due course, becoming unknown to many making use of these anonymized quotations. This pattern in the transmission of culture has been described as "Obliteration (of source) by Incorporation (into common discourse)—or OBI for short." Familiar instances are Francis Bacon's dictum "knowledge is power" (1597), Joseph Glanvill's "climates of opinion" (1661), and John Adams's "government of laws and not of men" (1774). In much the same fashion, many concepts-and-phrasings—such as charisma, stereotype, opportunity costs, significant others, and double-bind—have entered the vernacular with little awareness of their sources in the social sciences.

A correlative pattern is misattribution. Ockham's Razor ("What can be accounted for by fewer assumptions is explained in vain by more") is generally attributed to William of Ockham, but there is no compelling evidence that it was original with him. "Bad money drives out good money" is generally and mistakenly attributed to Thomas Gresham, and "the best government is that which governs least" has been variously attributed to Jefferson, Paine, Thoreau, and the nineteenth-century editor John Louis O'Sullivan. These and other cases of misattribution are identified in bibliographical annotations to the quotations in point.

Along with the most notable quotations with great staying power, other quotations were selected in terms of the following guidelines:

1. Substantive statements that express basic contributions which have begun to be much quoted.
2. Statements marking an important event or turning point in the history of social thought and the social sciences, such as the emergence of new fields or new methodologies.
3. Ideas, words, or phrases originating in the social sciences that have diffused into popular or vernacular use.
4. Quotations that illuminate the frontiers and interplay between the social sciences and the humanities or the physical and biological sciences.
5. Notable observations on social science generally or on one of its constituent disciplines.

Assembled over a period of several years, with the aid of many advisers, the quotations are drawn from a wide variety of sources: primarily books and journals, but also newspapers and magazines, collections of correspondence, diaries, epigraphs for books, and, on occasion, previously unpublished writings. In at least three cases (Thomas Jefferson, Karl Marx, Johann Heinrich von Thunen), the quotations are engraved on their authors' tombstones.