ABSTRACTS
C5.6 Philosophy of the Humanities and the Social Sciences

Karl Popper on Science of Society: A Refutation of Historicism
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When Karl Popper applied his understanding of science to politics, his agenda for the social sciences was to establish the idea of a science of society using the methodology entrenched in his critical rationalism. With critical rationalism in science, Popper emphasized falsification, conjecture and refutation, and in politics, he emphasized openness of society. Both applications of his philosophy are combined within Popper’s criticisms of Marx’s scientific materialist interpretation of history. Popper’s background as a philosopher of science focuses his criticisms of pseudo-scientific theories of society. As a philosopher of science Popper perceived as suspect claims by many scholars in the social sciences, such as Marx, who wrongfully assumed that they could predict and interpret social phenomena scientifically. Marxism, in particular, claimed to be a scientific theory of historical and social development. It also claimed for historical social science the same objective value as theoretical science. Popper regarded this pretension as the claims of pseudoscience. He criticised Marxism for incorporating a historicist method of prediction; a method believed to function with predictive power over the future course of human history. Popper maintained that the historicist method has exerted a profound and problematic influence on the rise of totalitarian regimes. In establishing a science of society, Popper’s preoccupation was to reveal the essential danger in historicist ideology and to show the inadequacy in the historicist’s method in the social sciences. In this paper, I argue that the refutation of the historicist doctrine of the social sciences which Popper attempted has validity. My argument is based on the premise that Popper sufficiently captured the flaws in the idea of historical prediction of social development with his distinction between immutable scientific laws and contingent social development trends. The failure of the historicist to distinguish this critical difference between the two domains weakens the historicist argument.

On Isaiah Berlin's Methodological Dualism Between the Natural Sciences and the Humanities
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Isaiah Berlin is certainly most widely known for his reflections on political theory and history of ideas than for those concerning philosophy of science. Nevertheless, recent interpreters have shown that his epistemological assumptions deeply influenced other aspects of his work. This paper aims to clarify some implications of his methodological dualism.

We will proceed as follows: in the first part, we will explain why he defends the autonomy of the humanities in front of the natural sciences; in his opinion, a unified method able to include all sciences is nothing less than "one of the most grotesque claims ever made by human beings". His main critical target is the application to the social sciences of the deductive-
nomological model, according to which the explanation of particular events must be based on covering laws as general as possible.

Secondly we will argue that, according to Berlin, this is due to a false analogy, leading us to systematically misunderstand our expectations from social sciences. Dazzled by the achievements of natural sciences, social scientists cultivate the illusion of extending to their disciplines something like the galileian model of experiment repeatable under uniform conditions, in order to reach their same degree of axiomatization, internal consistency, formal elegance and explanatory simplicity. In short, the sternness of Berlin's dualism has to be read as a “dam” against the scientific imperialism that hard sciences, by virtue of their undeniable successes, constantly tend to exercise over the humanities.

With this in mind, we will be able to approach the issue by focusing on Berlin's history of ideas. In this respect, his epistemological assumptions are deeply indebted to Vico's notion of “fantasia”: the logical positivists' “quest for certainty” blamed by Berlin is akin to the criticism against the “certum” that Vico developed in answer to Enlightenment rationalism.