

quantitative simplification could have a recursive effect on social scientists and engineers.⁸³ If statisticians did not broaden their outlook, Tukey warned, quantitative thinkers themselves risked being reduced to a kind of artificial intelligence.

After examining how artificial intelligence emerged out of the same milieu as a host of failed and discarded social scientific theories, the book concludes by returning to the current fractured and uncertain world of AI, where the field seems closer to the final days of Cold War social science than it does to completing its quest for a truly intelligent machine. In its naivete, public excitement, financial backing, and philosophical positivism, AI has also ironically left the scientific study of human thought and action as fractured as the days when Alan Turing first questioned the ability to understand people through scientific induction.⁸⁴ As A.O. Scott, film critic for the *New York Times*, explained in a survey of AI films, even the hype surrounding innovations in generative AI in early 2023 revealed that AI at its best revealed only “the banality of sentience,” as the modern version has failed to live up to the fevered dreams of futurists and science fiction writers.⁸⁵ Yet, as this book aims to show, the very real labor practices and biases inherent in centuries of social science may provide more relevant villains in modern AI than dystopian machines that attain some “human level.” In our hopes and fears about artificial intelligence, we would do well to remember that the modern world of twenty-first-century AI—with its endless questions of meaning and purpose, hierarchy of human labor, and endemic bias—owes it most distinctive traits to its descent from the social sciences.