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An Analysis of Gunnar Myrdal's Social and Educational Theory

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AN ANALYSIS OF GUNNAR MYRDAL'S
SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL THEORY

By

Jeanne Marie O'Toole

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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VITA

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PREFACE

The initial selection of the social theories and educational position of Gunnar Myrdal as a topic for a doctoral dissertation was prompted by the author's belief that there are numerous works that have meaning in the considerations of educational problems but that they are often overlooked by the professional educator. Myrdal's contributions to the theory of economic development were placed among the sixty-two leading achievements in the social sciences in this century in a recent study of the major advances in the social sciences. These achievements have had widespread acceptance and major social effects in a surprisingly short time.¹ The consideration of Myrdal's An American Dilemma as one of the bases for the United States Supreme Court decision in the Brown case indicates the extent to which his research and theories have penetrated American social and political thought.

Myrdal's research findings concerning racial problems in America, published in An American Dilemma, have had wide circulation. Though the writings of Myrdal are much quoted and often used as source material, there has been no attempt to analyze his research and writings in educational perspective.

¹Karl W. Deutsch, John Plaet, Dieter Singhaas, "Conditions Favoring Major Advances in Social Science," Science, February 5, 1971, pp. 450-454.

Little or no mention of his theories and findings is evident in the professional educational literature. In general, most educators are exposed to the thinking that is reflected in the literature and publications aimed specifically at the practitioner in the profession. As a result, thinking, models, and solutions to educational problems often suffer from a ghetto type of mentality and subsequently external opinions and fresh approaches are sorely needed.

Myrdal has developed a set of theoretical constructs which are functional in evaluating society and in encouraging social change. Social theory in itself does not necessarily promote a better society but action based on social theory may. Therefore, it is the author's aim to acquaint educators with the elements of Myrdal's social thought that are germane to education, with the hope that some of his social theory may be converted into educational practice.

The preparation of this dissertation was facilitated by assistance from many individuals. I am grateful to Gerald L. Gutek, Chairman of the Foundations of Education at Loyola University of Chicago, who stimulated my interest and patiently guided the research and writing of this dissertation. Dr. Gutek was generous with his time and offered valuable suggestions and penetrating comments on my writing, but always I marched to the beat of my own drummer.

I was fortunate to have such dedicated educators as Rosemary Donatelli, Assistant Professor Foundations of Education, and John Wozniak, Dean of the School of Education,

Loyola University of Chicago, read and comment on this dissertation during its early stages of preparation and in its final form. My fellow doctoral students in the Foundations of Education were always a willing sounding board for my ideas and supplied new dimensions to my thinking.

I wish to express my appreciation to Gunnar Myrdal, who graciously shared some of his material with me, and generously answered my many questions.

I appreciate the work of Carl Fransson, who labored long and painstakingly in the translation of the fourth chapter of Myrdal's Kontakt Med Amerika. This translation provided valuable insights into Myrdal's early educational philosophy.

I wish to thank especially Eleanor Nyland, who encouraged my work and generously gave of her time, reading and re-reading the manuscript in its formative stages. I am grateful to Dorothy Binder, St. Xavier's College, who made valuable comments on the final draft of the dissertation. Last but not least, I am grateful to Barbara Sherman, who patiently typed the manuscript.

CHAPTER I

MYRDAL'S MILIEU

Introduction

Nearly three decades have elapsed since Gunnar Myrdal, noted Swedish economist and social scientist, published An American Dilemma, his massive study of the Negro in America.¹ His book became a classic upon publication, and much of the material he gathered served as a reservoir for future studies of the Negro in the United States. Myrdal recently completed what could be considered a second epoch making study, Asian Drama,² which involved approximately one-fourth of the human race. This study was an examination of the varying and complex elements that in organizational form constitute man's environment at a specific time and place in history. Myrdal's two major studies have the potential of changing the patterns of man's institutional life.

Biographic Sketch

Gunnar Myrdal was born in Gustafs, Sweden in 1898. He graduated from the University of Stockholm Law School

¹Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (2 vols.; 2d ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964) (1st ed.; New York: Harper and Row, 1944).

²Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations (3 vols.; New York: Pantheon, 1968).

in 1923, and received his doctorate in economics from the same university in 1927. He began his career as a practicing lawyer in Sweden and embarked on his academic career as a docent in political economics at the University of Stockholm in 1927. Myrdal was an associate professor at the Post-Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland from 1930 to 1931, and was then appointed acting professor at the University of Stockholm in 1931. He held the chair of the Lars Hierta Professor of Political Economy and Financial Science from 1933 to 1950, and was appointed professor of International Economy in 1960. In 1961 Myrdal founded the Institute for International Economic Studies of Stockholm and since its inception has been the director. He is at present Chairman of the Board of two new research institutions: The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and The Latin American Institute.

Myrdal was one of the army of young turks who came to political power under the banner of the Social Democrats in 1933 when Sweden's fragile economy was badly crippled by a world-wide depression. Myrdal, a disciple of Swedish economist Knut Wicksell, made recommendations to the government on deficit financing of public works.³

³Lekachman has written that Wicksell "anticipated many Keynesian doctrines," and Schumpeter refers to Myrdal as one of the "Swedish stepping stones to Keynes." (See Appendix I).

These recommendations were enthusiastically put into practice--three years before the publication of Keynes' revolutionary General Theory and long before deficit spending became an economic nostrum.⁴

Concurrently the Swedish government was faced with an urgent social ill of a different nature--a declining birthrate. Myrdal drew attention to this problem in his book The Population Crisis, which was written in conjunction with his wife, Alve, and published in Stockholm in 1934. One result of this influential volume was the establishment of an official population commission in Sweden, of which Myrdal was a member. In 1938 Myrdal delivered a series of lectures at Harvard University on the theme of "The Population Problem and Social Policy."⁵ These lectures were sponsored by the Godkin Foundation under its general rubric, "The Essentials of Free Government and the Duties of the Citizen." Myrdal's lectures on population served as an introduction to the political consequences and economic effects of population trends.

Sweden was used as a point of reference in Myrdal's

⁴David Jenkins, Sweden and the Price of Progress (New York: Coward-McCann, 1968), pp. 51-53.

⁵Gunnar Myrdal, Population, A Problem for Democracy, The Godkin Lectures, 1939 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1940; reprinted Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962).

population analysis since it had become an experimental laboratory for many of his theories. His own description of his native culture enables one to understand how Sweden could produce a man of Myrdal's bent:

Swedish culture has on the whole a strongly rationalistic and technical slant The population in spite of a highly developed individualism has perhaps a stronger sense of collective participation in social affairs and a greater feeling of responsibility for the well-being of the whole country than populations of other countries possess.⁶

As a professional social engineer, Myrdal hopefully entertained the notion that America might profit from the European population experience. In discussing the population problem in Sweden, Myrdal drew attention to the inner moral conflict between publicly proclaimed views and private practice. In his words, the population problem became in Sweden "a crow-bar for social reforms," as the state recognized that the care of all children was its proper function. For America, he saw the population problem as continuing to dominate all social life. Myrdal stated "Democracy not only as a political form but with all its content of civic ideals and human life, must either solve this problem [population] or perish."⁷ While at Harvard, Myrdal was awarded an honorary L.L.D. by that university.

⁶Ibid., pp. 60-61.

⁷Ibid., p. 33.

Early in his career Myrdal was avant-garde. He brought scholarship into the political arena long before political activism became an academic accolade. He was elected to the Swedish Senate and served from 1935 to 1938, and again from 1947 to 1949. He was Minister of Commerce in the Swedish Cabinet from 1945 to 1947; was a member of the board of directors of the Central Bank of Sweden; and has served in various capacities as a member of government committees on housing, population, and agriculture. Professor Myrdal was Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe from 1947 to 1957.

As an economist, Myrdal is allied with the modern school. Many of his economic theories are based on the principles of social evolution and run contrary to traditional classical economic dogma. Classical economists, believing that economic life is governed by laws universally applicable, emphasized the "natural order" and the "economic man" as the driving forces in economic life. Classical economists emphasized production, supply, and costs in their approach to economic science.⁸ Myrdal is one of the group of contemporary social scientists who reject classical economic principles, and adhere to the theory that the

⁸Frank Neff, Economic Doctrines (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1950), pp. 7-11.

determining forces of most economic activities are lodged in existing institutions. This thesis was eloquently employed by Myrdal in his Asian Drama.

Myrdal's approach in Asian Drama was interdisciplinary, as it was his contention that economic problems cannot be studied in isolation but only in their demographic, social, and political settings. The basic assumption that underlaid his methodology was that economic underdevelopment could only be explained by means of a broad institutional approach. The central ideal in his institutional approach is that history and politics, theories and ideologies, economic structure and levels, and social stratification must be studied not in isolation, but in their mutual relationships.⁹

Threads of welfare economics are also woven into the fabric of Myrdal's economic analysis. General welfare economics stress the social values found in ethical principles and uses a qualitative approach to secure an equitable income distribution that provides larger expenditures for consumption. Myrdal extended the scope of his concern for an equitable distribution of income to the international level in his Rich Lands and Poor, in which he described and analyzed the wide and increasing economic inequities between the more and the less developed regions of the world:

I have chosen to focus attention on one particular aspect of the international situation, namely, the very large and steadily increasing economic

⁹Myrdal, Asian Drama, I, pp. ix-xi.

inequalities between developed and underdeveloped countries. Though these inequalities and their tendency to grow are flagrant realities, and though they form a basic cause of the international tension in our present world, they are usually not treated as a central problem in the literature on underdevelopment and development.¹⁰

Two of Myrdal's earliest books were purely economic in scope. The original Swedish text of Monetary Equilibrium¹¹ was a condensation of a series of lectures he delivered at Cambridge University on the monetary theory of his mentor, Wicksell. Myrdal based The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory¹² on a series of lectures delivered at the University of Stockholm in 1928. Myrdal's purpose in this book was to give an historical and critical account of the part played by political speculation in the development of economic theory. Basically this work was concerned with the history of ideas and was almost devoted entirely to criticism of economic theories in historical perspective.

Swedish Experience

As a prelude to the consideration of Myrdal's work,

¹⁰Gunnar Myrdal, Rich Lands and Poor: The Road to World Prosperity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957); published under the title of Economic Theory and Undeveloped Regions (London: Duckworth, 1957), p. xviii.

¹¹Gunnar Myrdal, Monetary Equilibrium (New York: Kelley reprint, 1965 (1939)); original Swedish text published under the title Om Penningteoret Jamvikt (Stockholm, 1931).

¹²Gunnar Myrdal, The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory, trans. from the German by Paul Streeten (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954).

it should be noted that Myrdal, an architect of the Swedish Welfare State, also reflects the Swedish experience. Some forty years ago, Marquis Childs observed the pragmatic nature of the Swedish people who relied on practical social and economic tools to minimize the effect of the worldwide depression and to maintain a comparatively high standard of living between the extremes of capitalism and collectivism. Endemic to the philosophy of the Swedish cooperative was a disdain for utopian short-cuts and a concentration on the "necessities" needed for a high standard of living, with the stress on production for use rather than for profit.¹³

Many of the ideas and opinions concerning the Swedish experience are derived from popular accounts and contain as much misinformation as information. Many observers of this experience are preoccupied with the social welfare policies of Sweden, but are oblivious to the system and processes which have produced the outputs. Americans, in particular, scrutinize the spectacular but minor imperfections of Swedish society--the "sin-sex-suicide-socialism" syndrome. Due to this misconception of the social order in Sweden, there is frequently a tendency to

¹³Marquis W. Childs, Sweden the Middle Way (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), pp. 2-6.

ignore or dismiss Myrdal's work with accusations of "welfare state" and "socialism." Those who take this stance fail to allow the notion of Sweden as a "disciplined" democracy to penetrate their thinking. Such traditional labels as "socialism" and "capitalism" cannot be used to describe accurately social and economic reality in Sweden. The system that has developed in Sweden is a complex balance between private and public forces which do not fit the traditional categories. At the risk of oversimplification, one could say that the production of goods and services is largely left to the private market, while the state has considerable influence over their allocation and distribution.¹⁴

To understand Myrdal's orientation, the "welfare state" may be defined as a "form of society characterized by a system of democratic government sponsored welfare" that offers a "guarantee of collective social care" to its citizens, concurrently with the "maintenance of a capitalist system of production."¹⁵ In the Swedish context and in the realm of Myrdal's thinking, socialism does not embrace the Marxian notion of class conflict and revolution. It is less concerned with the individual than the

¹⁴Joseph B. Board, Jr., The Government and Politics of Sweden (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), p. 229.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 229-231.

collective good. In Swedish practical politics, the so-called socialists embrace all but the communists, and often their ideologies differ little from those of the liberals and conservatives. It is important to recognize the irrelevance of classical liberalism to modern Swedish conditions, where there has not been much nationalization of industry. Sweden's welfare state is marked by an equilibrium between "government" and "business."¹⁶

Myrdal functioned as a member, party leader, and governmental official of the Social Democratic Party which came to power in Sweden in 1932. The Social Democrats began as a socialist party under the Marxist banner. Originally the Social Democrats had plans for nationalizing key industries, but they soon abandoned them when they recognized that private enterprise contributed to economic well-being. The excess baggage of theoretical Marxism was junked in the very beginning, and the party never really advocated violent social revolution. Basically their brand of socialism was pragmatic rather than dogmatic. This was evident in the decision of the Social Democrats, guided by Gunnar Myrdal then Minister of Commerce, to drop the proposal to nationalize the oil industry, private insurance companies, and shoe manufacture

¹⁶Ibid., p. 260.

after the Second World War because of pressure from the opposition. Though the Social Democrats may make a ritual genuflection to socialist doctrine, they are basically pragmatic rather than ideological.¹⁷

Over the years, Sweden's Social Democrats have come to feel more and more that government ownership is not the most efficient means of controlling the national economic life. Rather than direct ownership or exceptionally high corporation taxes, the Social Democrats have chosen a tight capital market. During its three and a half decades of virtually uninterrupted rule, the Social Democratic Party has preferred restricting the freedom of private enterprise by increasing government influence over the flow of capital. The Swedish government has the means of controlling the nation's economy, and this is all the more true as Swedish policy sharply restricts the inflow of foreign capital for financing Swedish activities.¹⁸

In Swedish politics the term "bourgeois" refers to the liberals and conservatives, and the term Socialistic attached to the Social Democrats does not indicate that they are cheek-by-jowl with the Communists. In reality,

¹⁷Frederic Fleisher, The New Sweden, the Challenge of a Disciplined Democracy (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1967), pp. 87-101.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 122-126.

the term 'Socialist' in Sweden refers to a tradition and to a kind of social stance and is more a staple of campaign rhetoric than anything else.¹⁹ The Social Democrats are not without opposition as the neo-socialist parties are ideologically concerned over an increase of government influence. They are inclined to view the state and the individual as irreconcilable. By contrast, the Social Democrats view the state as an instrument to solve the problems of the individuals in a just manner. The Social Democrats and Myrdal as well are not suspicious of broad state intervention, nor do they believe that free enterprise is innately superior to all other forms of economic activity. They have, however, never made a frontal attack on the concept of private property, and even today, their emphasis is on the indirect control over large sectors of the economy.²⁰

If there is any single policy to which the entire Swedish public is committed, it is the maintenance of full employment. Economic interest organizations exist in Sweden primarily for the purpose of improving the economic position of their membership. These organizations may have a reformist bent, but their main thrust is directed at

¹⁹Ibid., p. 92.

²⁰Board, The Government and Politics of Sweden, p. 63.

matters of self-interest. Full employment, high wages, and taxes have all but eliminated poverty in Sweden. Private enterprise dominates the market at every turn and ninety per cent of all industrial employment is in the private sector. The Swedish economy is not only overwhelmingly private, but it is also dominated to a remarkable extent by a relatively few large firms. (The government is currently investigating this problem.) Sweden's welfare state is marked by a condition of equilibrium between "government" and "business." While the balance is precarious at any given moment, it gives the impression of indefinite stability.²¹

Geography is said to be the matrix of history, and Sweden is a case in point. Her location has been of considerable consequence in her history, conferring on Sweden all the advantages and disadvantages of a relative isolation that has allowed development within a minimum of interference. Though it was a major European power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Swedish battles were fought mostly on foreign soil. After surrendering dreams of grandeur and with Europe willing to let Sweden alone, the Swedes looked inward in much the same manner as modern Britain.

During Sweden's formative period as a nation, the

²¹Ibid., pp. 239-249.

country lay in relative isolation permitting a stability and continuity of development with few parallels in European history. After the eighteenth century Sweden marched to its own drummer relatively unaffected by external forces. During the modern period, with the possible exception of World War II, Sweden has not been faced with any crucial challenges, foreign or domestic, and has encountered none of the crises of legitimacy and authority which have beset most European nations.²²

The peasants in Sweden have had more political and social freedom than peasants in other parts of Western Europe, and yet the country in its social structure remained essentially medieval throughout the sixteenth century.²³ Until about 1870 Sweden was clearly backward by Western European standards. A series of weak foreign-born monarchs were reduced to a largely ceremonial role while real power lay with the Riksdag (Parliament). This situation in Sweden was in sharp contrast to the royal absolutism that prevailed in Europe during this time. The period from 1809 to 1921 witnessed the steady growth of most of Sweden's present political institutions, and it was during this time that Sweden, in effect, passed from a medieval political and social

²²Ibid., p. 22.

²³Fleisher, The New Sweden, the Challenge of a Disciplined Democracy, p. 42.

structure to one of the world's more highly developed states.

Sweden has emerged from a poor agricultural state with an undemocratic class society, with wealth concentrated in the hands of a few and destitution the lot of the vast majority of people, to an affluent, modern disciplined democracy where poverty is almost nonexistent and great wealth is extremely rare. Because Sweden became urbanized only in recent times, the density of its urban clusters is somewhat less than those of most other parts of Western Europe. She has been able to avoid many of the social disruptions characteristic of urban populations. The gradual pace of urbanization alone does not, however, account for Sweden's progress. Of prime importance is the striking homogeneity of Swedish society and culture. Also, there is unusual homogeneity in language, ethnic composition, and religion.²⁴

Sweden is, in all probability, the most highly organized democratic country in the world. There is a wide variety of groups and participation in them is widespread. So much influence is exercised by them that the Swedes themselves sometimes refer to their country as "Organization Sweden." The membership of Swedish interest groups is

²⁴Ibid., p. 6.

unusually homogeneous, and most Swedes are still known by what they do in life--they are functionally identified.²⁵ The Swedish interest group is occupationally homogeneous because Swedish society is so organized. These organizations more than any other phenomenon can be said to have had great consequences for the development of political democracy in Sweden. Above all else, these organizations and movements gave millions of ordinary men and women an opportunity and the encouragement to participate in small-scale democracies. As Fleisher says, "They were in fact pre-democratic schools for a democratic politics and much of Swedish politics today bears the unmistakable mark of their influence."²⁶ Board sees these groups resulting from: (1) the Swedish disposition to compromise; (2) their reluctance to let concern for a part become an obsession for the whole; (3) the limited nature of Swedish political objectives; (4) last but not least, the strong strain of genuine idealism in Swedish politics.

Because Sweden is unusually dependent on international trade, Swedish policy is aimed at promoting a relaxation of trade barriers. The most remarkable aspect

²⁵Board, The Government and Politics of Sweden, p. 23.

²⁶Fleisher, The New Sweden, the Challenge of a Disciplined Democracy, pp. 42-44.

of Sweden's foreign affairs is that the Swedes have managed to avoid both war and entangling alliances since 1914. The reasons for this happy condition are difficult to isolate, but they are basically her history, geography, and good fortune. Sweden had the good sense to drop pretensions of being a great power when it was no longer realistic and "adopted an international role more consonant with her resources."²⁷

The cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy is "neutrality." More precisely, Sweden is "alliance-free" in peace and neutral in war. This should not be mistaken for non-involvement, as Sweden has shown increased interest in recent years in extending aid to developing nations. Gunnar Myrdal, one of Sweden's leading Social Democrats, directed the study on Southeastern Asia, Asian Drama, which highlighted the difficulties that must be surmounted in developing nations and focused on the need for a reappraisal of the theories basic to their planning efforts. Sweden's size and geography set certain limitations on her foreign policy and its policy of neutrality imposes others. Yet if Sweden is limited in some ways, it escapes some of the limitations which are the unavoidable lot of a great power.

Sweden is one of the richest countries in Europe and one in which there has been a great economic leveling out among the population. This leveling process coupled with

²⁷Board, The Government and Politics of Sweden, p. 188.

a rare sense of security have rendered the Swedes amenable to social change. The social revolution that has taken place in Sweden during the past half century is nearly incomprehensible. In 1910 children of the destitute were often auctioned off to the highest bidder. Yet today Sweden has probably more enlightened welfare plans than any other country in the world. Supposedly the Swedes are taken care of from the womb to the tomb.

Thus historical circumstances, relative geographic isolation, and homogeneity of population afforded the climate and pre-conditioning necessary for social engineering in Sweden. Being a relatively small and homogeneous nation with less than eight million people, Sweden served as an excellent laboratory for social change. These changes in Sweden have been gradual, but intervals of stagnation have been rare. Myrdal's writings reflect not only the happy experience of Swedish society, but the pragmatic outlook of the Swedish people. This pragmatism, however, appears to be tempered with a gradualism that is absent in the American character.

Even though the welfare state has made progress in solving many of Sweden's economic problems, it should not be considered a panacea for all social ills. To date, the welfare state falls short of Utopia, and there is ample evidence that Sweden suffers from many of the social dislocations that plague other contemporary societies. Swedes,

until a decade ago, focused their attention and much of their energies on improving the material standards of its citizens, but now their attention is focused on the problems of adjustment caused by accelerating changes in a highly industrialized country.

Even in the economic realm, Sweden is having her problems. Recently the government had to call a halt to strikes, as even the university professors were out on strike. The Swedes are beginning to rebel at their high rate of taxation, which has now reached forty-four per cent of the GNP, as compared to twenty-two per cent of the GNP in the United States. Myrdal was quoted in a recent newspaper editorial as stating flatly "The organized welfare state has gone mad."²⁸

The theories in Myrdal's works mirror the environment in which they were nurtured. It must be remembered that the relatively small homogeneous population of Sweden rendered social engineering feasible. The cultural conditioning of the Swedish people established a climate in which long range goals were accepted as endemic to planning. Myrdal could not divorce himself from his personal milieu, and his theories reflect, to a degree, the Swedish experience.

²⁸Editorial, Chicago Daily News, March 1, 1971, p. 8.

Review of Major Works

When the Carnegie Corporation decided to "import" a general director for a comprehensive study of the Negro in America, they looked to Sweden, a country of high intellectual and scholarly standards, in which traditions associated with racial issues were absent. Their search ended in 1937 in the selection of Gunnar Myrdal, who despite his youth had an international reputation as a social economist, professor, economic advisor to the Swedish government, and a member of the Swedish Senate. Myrdal had some contact with America as he had spent a year in the United States in 1927 as a Fellow of the Spelman Fund. When the Trustees of the Carnegie Corporation commissioned the report, they could not have foreseen that its publication would coincide with an era in which public interest would be focused on the Negro in America.²⁹

Myrdal brought to his research the expertise of the economist and sociologist. He did not ignore the historical aspects of the problem. His academic credentials were strengthened by an objective approach undoubtedly due in some measure to the fact that he was an impersonal observer of a scene in which he had no emotional or personal involvement. One could hardly accuse him of being a prejudiced witness and, for many, this added credibility to his

²⁹Francis P. Keppel, Foreward to An American Dilemma, pp. xlvii-1.

account.

In his introduction to An American Dilemma, Myrdal paints a favorable picture of Americans generally, and assigns them a propitious place in the hierarchy of Western civilization. He viewed them as people with a "moral-conscious and a rationalistic nature" that distinguishes them from many of their contemporaries in Western civilization. Myrdal found in Americans a close relation between their "moralism and rationalism," and this is what he calls the "American ethos." Myrdal regarded the American Negro problem as being "in the heart of the American." He saw the conflict between valuations on one hand and behavior on the other, and pointed out the need to close the gap between the two. He derived the title for his book from the "ever-raging conflict between the valuations preserved on the general plane" which he called the "American Creed," and the "valuations of individual and group living." Myrdal saw "the moral struggle going on within people and not only between them." This then is why for Myrdal the Negro problem was An American Dilemma.

Topically, the study treats of the Negro under the rubrics of race, population and migration, economics,

³⁰Myrdal, An American Dilemma, pp. lxi-lxxxiii.

politics, justice, social inequality, social stratification, leadership and concerted action and the Negro community. Myrdal's work was an analysis, not a description. He used as his testing points the valuations which Americans have proclaimed in what Myrdal calls "the American Creed." This is the creed of democracy and equality, which was taken from the historical experience of the Anglo-American peoples, and was enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

In spite of the "American Creed" and its egalitarian ideals, Myrdal shows in great detail how in the South a way of life had been built upon the segregation of the Negro people. Even the upper-class Negroes, the professionals and the businessmen were forced by dictates of the law to earn their living in what Myrdal calls "the backwater of discrimination." With respect to economic, political, and other relations, he showed over and over again how discriminations of the Whites against the Negroes run counter to our deep-seated democratic and Christian morality.

One of the basic assumptions in Myrdal's study was the necessity and desirability of reducing the bias in white people's racial beliefs concerning Negroes. Myrdal's logical conclusion was to improve the Negro status, behavior, and characteristics, and thereby reduce white bias. Myrdal found "The impediment of the strategy was, of course, that white beliefs, directly and indirectly were active forces in

keeping the Negroes low--the vicious circle."³¹

In order to reduce white bias toward the Negro, Myrdal recommended: (1) correcting the ordinary white man's opinions of the Negro; (2) demonstrating the fallacy of generalizing from particulars; (3) indicating the errors made from misinformation. Myrdal's basic approach was educational. Implicit was the notion that the white man needs this kind of education as well as the Negro. Myrdal affirmed his faith in man and echoed the Aristotelian idea that man by his nature seeks knowledge and truth.

It is principally through encouraging research and through espousing the masses of people to its results that a society can correct the false popular beliefs by objectivizing the material out of which beliefs are fabricated.³²

In this work Myrdal gave full consideration of the influences of environmental, economic, and psychological forces, and yet did not seek in the Negro problem confirmation of the deterministic doctrines of Darwin, Marx or Freud. He did not start out to prove a thesis, but his research led him to conclude that the disadvantages suffered by the Negroes were not irremediable. From Myrdal's study emerges the dynamic proposition that we can make history kneel to the power of our organized effort.

³¹Ibid., p. 109

³²Ibid., p. 110.

An International Economy³³ examined the present state of international economic relations within the non-Soviet world. Myrdal's interest in the economic problems of the underdeveloped countries was, to a degree, an outgrowth of his research as head of the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, in which he was involved from its beginning in 1947. The main thrust of this book was directed toward integration in the economic sphere. Myrdal endeavored to reveal the true nature of integration, and to show how it related to the international scene.

Myrdal began his analysis from the problems of the advanced countries, and only gradually took in the problems of the underdeveloped countries. From Myrdal's point of view the economic gap between the developed and underdeveloped countries implies the existence of vicious circles which "can only be broken by a large-scale state planning and state intervention." Of all the individual factors that could be considered significant for development, Myrdal attached particular importance to certain ideological and cultural forces, among them the "early attainment of general literacy, established respect for the rule of law and the implicit ideal of equality before the law," and last but not least, "the ethical value attached to work responsibility."³⁴

³³Gunnar Myrdal, An International Economy, Problems and Prospects (New York: Harper Torchbook Edition, 1969); first published New York: Harper and Row, Incorporated, 1956

³⁴Ibid., pp. 15-19.

The main conclusion that came out of this study was that "in the present stage of history, nations in the non-Soviet world are not prepared in peace time to accept the degree of international solidarity which would make possible progress towards international economic integration."³⁵

Myrdal asks the question, "does not the very idea of human rights and fundamental freedoms carry with it the concept of universality?" And, of course, the answer points to what Myrdal referred to as the "moral dilemma" of the advanced industrialized countries. This dilemma is related to the fact that the "welfare state" which we have built up and which we are not going to give up is nationalistic to the core.

In this work, Myrdal has synthesized and provided a framework for the kind of economic thinking which typifies much of the writings of the spokesmen for the underdeveloped areas. The notion that somehow or other the Western European nations can pull their chestnuts out of the fire and proceed towards international economic integration puts Myrdal in the camp of the optimists, and yet he is realistically honest in his prognosis for the future. He views World Government as an ideal that is not likely to be attained. His approach is that of the gradualist--take one step at a time. His vision of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow does not include economic integration, given today's international climate.

³⁵Ibid., p. 315.

Myrdal, who has long argued that the effects of the present system of world trade are harmful to the interests of underdeveloped countries, delivered the National Bank of Egypt Fiftieth Anniversary Commemoration Lectures at Cairo in 1955.³⁶ Rich Lands and Poor is a revision of the fore-mentioned lectures. In this volume, which is characterized by an informality and sometimes personal manner of expression that is quite palatable, Myrdal described and analyzed the wide and increasing economic inequalities which exist between the more and the less developed regions of the world.

In essence, Myrdal stressed several pertinent points. Increasingly, economic inequalities and the growing recognition of these are important political realities in the contemporary world. The causes of poverty and lack of development cannot be understood by use of classical economic theories, and in particular, by an assumption that a stable equilibrium exists within and between nations. Myrdal stressed the need of a dynamic approach which sees the economic process as a cumulative one. Because of circular causation, such a process involves an increasing rate of change among all relevant variables. In Myrdal's schema, such change requires "policy interferences" through planning

³⁶Gunnar Myrdal, "Development and Underdevelopment," in Reshaping the World Economy, ed. by John A. Pincus (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

programs to reach national goals, which in turn demand a sweeping aside of such biased and inadequate doctrinal predilections as laissez faire and free trade.

One could question Myrdal's dictum that the "principle of interlocking, circular interdependence within a process of cumulative causation . . . should be the main hypothesis when studying underdevelopment and development."³⁷ However, this principle is one that is worthy of detailed study. As in previous works, Myrdal again questions traditional approaches and established habits of thoughts.

The relationship between values on the one hand, and sociological theory and research on the other, poses a persistent unresolved issue in sociology. In a volume of essays entitled Value in Social Theory,³⁸ Myrdal argued forcefully that values are inextricably interwound in research questions and indeed in the very concepts of social science. This inter-relationship requires a vigorous attempt to make the relationship between values and sociology explicit and clear. This represented a shift from Myrdal's earlier position that the simple statement of one's values would in and of itself clarify their relationship to the concepts employed and the work being done. In these essays,

³⁷Myrdal, Rich Lands and Poor, p. 23.

³⁸Gunnar Myrdal, Value in Social Theory: A Selection of Essays on Methodology, ed. by Paul Streeten (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959) (1st ed.; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).

Myrdal emphasized the need for clarifying at each step the relationship between values, commitments, scientific concepts, research techniques, and hypotheses.

In Myrdal's view there is a partiality to all sociological theories because they are rooted in value perspectives. This, however, does not destroy the quest for objectivity. Rather he sees each as bringing together and ordering different, although sometimes overlapping, areas of empirical data. For Myrdal, this process is a never-ending one. He places objectivity within a context of assumption, presupposition, and value commitment as well as empirical fact.

Because of his position as Executive Director of the United States Economic Commission for Europe, Myrdal was well versed in the intricate problems of international cooperation. This experience assisted him in preparing a psychological analysis of the problems of international cooperation. He made this analysis in a paper "Psychological Impediments to Effective International Cooperation" presented at a joint meeting of the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. At that meeting, the Kurt Lewin Memorial Award was conferred on Myrdal in recognition of his great services to the social sciences and international cooperation.³⁹

Myrdal, when delivering the Storrs Lectures on Jurisprudence at the Yale Law School in 1958, restricted himself

³⁹Gunnar Myrdal, "Psychological Impediments to Effective International Co-operation," comments by Martin Domke in the American Journal of International Law, XLVIII (April, 1954), pp. 304-307.

to analyzing the trend towards planning in the "rich western" countries and the international implications of this trend. He enlarged on parts of these lectures, and utilized material from the Kurt Lewin Memorial Award Lectures when preparing Beyond the Welfare State.⁴⁰ This book was primarily concerned with the history and present tendencies of the welfare states of the "rich western" powers. Myrdal's main subject was the continuing evolution of western welfare states toward his ultimate ideal of being "the people's home." He stressed the ways in which, through a series of ad hoc government interventions, a "created harmony" and "social convergence" have already come into being without conscious plan, and looked forward to the day when much of the legalistic and detailed intervention by the state could be replaced by a new infrastructure of cooperative associations and local boards of citizens.

Perhaps some of Myrdal's best and most original passages concerned the psychological reactions of people in the western countries to economic planning, foreign aid, and to the various institutions that affect their economic lives. This presentation was in very general terms, and was directed primarily at academicians and intellectual laymen.

⁴⁰ Gunnar Myrdal, Beyond the Welfare State, Economic Planning and Its International Implications (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), originally published in the series of Storrs Lectures in Jurisprudence, Yale Law School, 1958.

Challenge to Affluence⁴¹ was an outgrowth of a paper Myrdal contributed to the Tenth Anniversary Convocation of the Fund for the Republic in June of 1963, and the McEnervey lectures delivered at the University of California at Berkeley in April of 1963. Myrdal's major concern in Challenge to Affluence was the sluggish and jerky development of the American economy. For Myrdal, the proper role of government was to keep business growing and stable, keep employment up, and provide for social justice and social mobility of the worker. Myrdal was not optimistic about the American economy because of the type of government, the lack of consumer organization, and the weakness of institutional organizations. For Myrdal the final solution to the problem would be long-range planning and an increase in education. In order to achieve these ends, Myrdal viewed an increase in the economic role of government as necessary.

Myrdal's Asian Drama was conceived initially as a modest venture by the Twentieth Century Fund. However, it refused to stop growing and ten years of investigation was spent in its preparation. The initial plan was for a general study of conditions and prospects for development in South Asia. Myrdal was not aware when he started this project of the extremely frail basis for factual knowledge about the

⁴¹Gunnar Myrdal, Challenge to Affluence (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962)

South Asian region. He found that most of the figures so confidently quoted in the literature proved upon inspection to be purely crude guesses, often untenable. Of all the countries where statistical information was available, India proved to have the most reliable data, but even here statistics could only be quoted with tongue in cheek.

Throughout the study there was a preoccupation with methodology. It focuses on the connection between theory and fact and the distinction between plausible hypothesis and verified constructs. It seeks standards of accuracy. As research of necessity starts from theory, a set of analytical preconceptions, the utilization of the tools and models that were forged in the West went against the grain with Myrdal. One of the main themes of his study was that the use of western theories, models and concepts in the study of economic problems in the South Asian countries was the cause of bias seriously distorting any study. He cites as evidence the neat division of income into two parts, consumption and saving, which is realistic in western societies where the general income levels and a stratified income system redistributed by social security and other policies have largely abrogated any influence of conception on productivity. This is not the case in the underdeveloped countries of South Asia.⁴²

⁴²Myrdal, Asian Drama, I, pp. 41-44.

Myrdal expressed the premises of this study in terms of the "Modernization Ideals"⁴³ which were mainly the ideology of the politically alert, articulate, and active part of the population, particularly the intellectual elite. "Modernization Ideals" have to conflict and compete with conflicting valuations. Myrdal felt that rapid strides toward the realization of the "Modernization Ideas" must be made in order to avoid increasing misery and social upheaval in South Asia.

It became obvious to Myrdal that the studies of the problems of underdeveloped countries were then undertaken, not with the view to the universal and timeless values, but with a view to the narrow political or narrower still, military-strategic interests of one state or block of states. Various types of studies had been justified by their contribution to the "security" of western countries. Myrdal concluded that a major source of bias in much economic research on poor countries was the endeavor to treat their internal problems from the point of view of the western political and military interest in saving them from Communism.

From this study, Myrdal became more and more convinced of the realism of the hypothesis that "often it is not more difficult but easier to cause a big change rapidly than a

⁴³"Modernization Ideals," see Appendix II.

small change gradually."⁴⁴ The bigger and more rapid change ordinarily must be attained by resolutely altering the institutions within which people live and work, instead of trying by direct or indirect means, to induce changes in attitudes while leaving institutions to adjust themselves to the changed attitudes. Myrdal saw the low level of social discipline in the South Asian countries as a serious impediment to change.

Much of what Myrdal reported about the countries of South Asia was far from pleasant. Often his analysis focused on problems that appeared insurmountable, but he never gave way to pessimism. Implicit in his thinking was the idea of freedom of choice, and the concept that man is not completely predetermined by his particular geographic, economic, cultural, or social milieu. According to Myrdal, the drama of South Asia had as its unity a set of inner conflicts operating on people's minds that are basic to all human life, in all times, and all places. The basic conflict in this drama was then the desire for change on the part of the peoples of South Asia and their inhibitions about accepting the consequences and paying the price for them. According to Myrdal, "History then is not taken to be predetermined but within the power of man to shape. And the

⁴⁴Myrdal, Asian Drama, I, p. 115.

drama thus conceived is not necessarily tragedy."⁴⁵

In March of 1969 Myrdal delivered the Herter Lectures at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies under the general title "The Rich and Poor Countries: A Strategy for Development in the 1970's." The direct outgrowth of these lectures was The Challenge of World Poverty,⁴⁶ which was a continuation of Asian Drama and in a sense a guide to it. There was a sense of urgency in this book. Myrdal believes that unless the political and economic framework in the Third World is changed, the eruption of modern techniques into the traditional societies, giving superior material standards and power, will cause vast convulsions and bloody revolution.

In education, Myrdal demanded sweeping reforms of school systems. Elitism reaching back to colonial dominance must give way to emphasis on adult education and to education that is basically linked with the agrarian program. He again stressed the need for the "equality issues to be central in the development problems of underdeveloped countries"⁴⁷ and

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁶Gunnar Myrdal, The Challenge of World Poverty: A World Anti-Poverty Program in Outline (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 420.

this egalitarianism relates not only to economic but to social issues including educational reform and taxation. Myrdal reminds the reader that the very idea that the developed countries should show a special consideration for the welfare and economic development of underdeveloped nations and should even be prepared to feel a collective responsibility for aiding them is an entirely new concept dating from the Second World War.

In spite of the heavy demands of Myrdal's role as scholar and politician, he has found time to address various gatherings. In 1953 he opened the Conference of the British Sociological Association with an address entitled "The Relation between Social Theory and Social Policy."⁴⁸ One of the main points Myrdal stressed in this address was the need for value premises in making scientific factual observations and in analyzing their causal interrelation. It was Myrdal's contention that for social research we need viewpoints and that they presume valuations. For Myrdal then a "disinterested social science" is a fallacy.

Myrdal addressed the American Institute of Planners in 1967 on "The Necessity and Difficulty of Planning the

⁴⁸Gunnar Myrdal, "The Relation between Social Theory and Social Policy," British Journal of Sociology, IV (September, 1953), pp. 210-242.

Future Society."⁴⁹ He cautioned that planning must not be undertaken in a mood of optimism, but rather with the courage of almost desperation. He warned against deceptive hopefulness of easy success and reminded that planning requires striving against heavy odds.

At the Montreal 1967 Exhibition, Myrdal spoke about an "Economist's Vision of a Sane World."⁵⁰ While Myrdal admitted to having no panacea for the making the world more sane, he felt that there were general areas in the economic realm that required attention. He saw the need for a much broader stream of capital and technology flowing from the rich to the poor countries, and for action to be taken to improve their trading position. He voiced grave concern about the armament race and the need to effectively disseminate birth control among the masses.

Myrdal contributed a paper on "Gandhi as a Radical Liberal"⁵¹ to the Gandhi Centenary Commemoration Volume in 1968. In retrospect, Myrdal viewed Gandhi as a radical leveler, who saw that the aim of greater equality was not in

⁴⁹Gunnar Myrdal, "The Necessity and Difficulty of Planning the Future Society" (address at the National Consultation on the Future Environment of a Democracy: the Next Fifty Years, called by the American Institute of Planners, Washington, D. C., October 3, 1967. Mimeographed).

⁵⁰Gunnar Myrdal, "An Economist's Vision of a Sane World" (lecture sponsored by the 1967 Exhibition in Montreal under the theme "Man and His World," Montreal, 1967. Mimeographed).

⁵¹Gunnar Myrdal, "Gandhi as a Radical Liberal" (paper contributed for the Gandhi Centenary Commemoration Volume, New Delhi, 1970. Mimeographed).

competition with economic progress but instead a necessary condition for it. For Myrdal, Gandhi's concept of trusteeship was a practical compromise mainly motivated by his rejection of violence and his realization that the rich would not willingly give up their possessions.

Giving the concluding address at the Inaugural Meeting of the One Asian Assembly⁵² was for Myrdal a recognition of the worldwide Academic Republic. This Republic has no other power other than the power of scientific analysis and rational advice, and in order to serve the public well needs the fullest freedom. It was important in Myrdal's estimation for all scientists to speak with the same voice in all parts of the world.

Myrdal appeared on Firing Line⁵³ with William F. Buckley, Jr. in November of 1970. This program gave America's audiences an opportunity to hear Myrdal repeat and defend some of the theories he has posited over the years.

Conclusion

Gunnar Myrdal, Swedish economist, ranks as one of the real prophets of our time. Almost thirty years ago he predicted that the American Negro was on the verge of insisting

⁵²Gunnar Myrdal (address delivered at the Inaugural Meeting of the One Asia Assembly, Meralco Theatre, Manila, The Philippines, April 11, 1970, pp. 1-7. Mimeographed).

⁵³Firing Line, P. B. S. telecast, November 23, 1969.

on a major place in society. Myrdal did not envision the outbreak of overt racial antagonism and violence in the cities of the North. He thought that racial violence on the part of the Negro would occur in the South and not in the North. The course of events has proven him in error on this point. Myrdal's thesis of violence seemed farfetched at the time he wrote An American Dilemma, but many of his predictions have come alarmingly true.

In the late 1920's, Myrdal was a budding economist in Sweden who helped produce a Keynesian revolution in economics before Keynes. Following many of his financial dictums, Sweden came through the depression of the 1930's with relatively little unemployment. Myrdal shocked conventional Swedes with bold proposals for government programs to stimulate the birth rate in Sweden.

For most of his life Myrdal has been annoying not only his fellow Swedes but also (as he likes to say it), his fellow Americans. He had ample opportunity to annoy many people in his ten years as Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. He is a small country gadabout, who has spent his life as both international civil servant and disturber of civil complacency.

Myrdal considers himself an adopted son of America, and he spent time here in the 1930's and the 1940's studying the Negro problem, and from familiarity acquired a deep affection for the United States. In New York, when being

interviewed, he said "Both my feet are planted here. I feel a total identification with American ideals."⁵⁴ For a time his children attended a progressive school affiliated with Columbia University, and his daughter is married to the President of Harvard University.

Myrdal first achieved fame in America as a student of the American Negro problem. In the 1960's his Challenge to Affluence attacked the slow growth rate of the United States economy. His book helped influence the government policies that have increased our growth rates.⁵⁵ In Asian Drama Myrdal studied the economics of South Asia and concluded that more than investment is required to improve them. Myrdal found the real problem in South Asia to be rooted in the culture of those countries and in his view, only education will solve them.

In 1963, Myrdal made one of his frequent appearances before a United States Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Manpower. Myrdal stirred things up by proclaiming that the United States needed not only tax cuts, but also more government spending. He attacked what he considered the negative American labor position on automation. For Myrdal, labor's

⁵⁴"Good Friend and Critic," Business Week, December 14, 1963, p. 57.

⁵⁵"As I See It" an interview with Gunnar Myrdal, Forbes, April 1, 1968, pp. 68-69.

position was not sound for as he saw it there was no connection between automation and unemployment.⁵⁶

Myrdal is probably the number one favorite of American Foundations, and some consider him an American obsession of sorts. Myrdal is not without his critics in America. He has been referred to as that "sanctimonious Swede who has been paid well for telling us what's wrong with our country for a generation now."⁵⁷

The theories and pronouncements in Myrdal's works cannot be separated from the environment in which they were nurtured. The understanding of one is impossible without the understanding of the other. During Myrdal's lifetime Sweden was transformed from a stagnant national poorhouse into one of the most prosperous countries in Europe. Under the leadership of the Social Democrats, with Myrdal as an active participant, Sweden integrated capitalism with a number of welfare programs.

Myrdal is no ritualistic liberal. In politics he is a Swedish Social Democrat. However, his fellow liberals are often shocked and disturbed by some of his pronouncements. For example, it was his belief that the almost ten years of foreign aid "crucial and magnificent" during the Marshall Plan was overdone and that the United States was overgenerous.

⁵⁶"Good Friend and Critic," Business Week, December 14, 1963, pp. 57-60.

⁵⁷Firing Line, P. B. S. telecast, November 23, 1969.

From Myrdal's standpoint, it would have been far better if the United States had given assistance much earlier in the form of loans rather than grants.⁵⁸

Myrdal, who was never a parvenue on the intellectual scene, was not without recognition from his peers. In addition to his honorary degree from Harvard, he received honorary degrees from Yale, Fisk, Columbia, Brandeis, Howard, and Wayne State Universities. He also received honorary degrees from the Universities of Edinburgh, Birmingham, Nancy, and the New School for Social Research. He is a member of the Royal Academy of Science (Sweden), and an honorary fellow of the American Economic Association.

The first \$10,000 Gunnar Myrdal Prize, established for books of distinction in the study of human behavior was awarded in 1970. This prize was established in 1968 by Harper and Row as an annual award to honor Dr. Myrdal for his many unique and varied contributions to human knowledge. The award recognizes contributions "to the study of man and man's environment which transcend the limits of any single discipline."⁵⁹

In retrospect, there are two characteristics that are strongly evident in Myrdal that undoubtedly have contributed to the enormity of his scholarship. One of these is sheer physical

⁵⁸"As I See It," Forbes, p. 69.

⁵⁹The New York Times, September 10, 1970, p. 36.

stamina, as Myrdal carried a workload over the years that would kill an ordinary man. The other is the courage or the sheer effrontery he possessed which enabled him to tackle the two big important topics treated in An American Dilemma and Asian Drama.

Myrdal emerges as a practitioner of a modern economic and social science which is predominantly dynamic, and is historical and statistical, as well as deductive in method. In his schema the study of wealth is related to other social phenomena, and recognition is given to the moral side to economics, as well as the economic side to morals. Throughout his writings the humane spirit prevails, and he expresses optimism as to the amelioration of the condition of the masses.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Introduction

Gunnar Myrdal embarked upon his career as an economist, but he never became an intellectual prisoner of the system he attempted to explain. Usually economists communicate poorly with laymen, and frequently, not well with one and another. Myrdal, however, never became hopelessly bogged down in minutiae or vague abstractions that are difficult to relate to everyday concerns. In the aftermath of the First World War, the political practitioners in Sweden followed Myrdal's leadership and adopted the welfare state. According to the Swedish economist Kragh:

During the depression it came to be realized that the traditional methods of monetary policy did not go far enough. The Budget Bill of 1933 did in fact question the adequacy of fiscal policies as an instrument of influencing the business cycle. A well-known report, written in 1933 by Professor Gunnar Myrdal . . . thus laid down the views and conclusions on which the country's [Sweden] fiscal policy was subsequently based.¹

Thus Myrdal became more than just another academic critic of formal economic methodology, as he was able to convert

¹Borje Kragh, "Sweden's Monetary and Fiscal Policy before and after the Second World War," Supplement to Svenska Handelsbanken's Index (June, 1946), p. 5.

economic theory into practice. Myrdal's major hypothesis was that socio-economic forces interlock in a process of circular causation. In Myrdal's schema, circular causation is a cumulative sequence of interrelated actions occurring somewhat in the manner of a social chain reaction.² Endemic to this hypothesis is Myrdal's methodological approach, which is interdisciplinary in scope, and broadly based in existing social institutions.

Problems of Biases in Social Sciences

Once Myrdal took the road towards integration of the diverse and varied elements within the existing social order, there was no turning back, and his work assumed all the overtones of the social sciences as he focused on the totality of social reality. The accepted ethos of the social sciences is the search for "objective" truth, and this poses some fundamental methodological problems. In Objectivity in Social Research,³ Myrdal presents a succinct statement of these problems. Of primary concern is the notion of objectivity in itself. The social scientist can

²The basic notion of circular causation reoccurs explicitly and implicitly in Myrdal's work. A technical treatment of this concept is found in Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama, An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon, 1968), Appendix 2, pp. 1843-1847. The concept of circular causation will be discussed in chapter four of this dissertation.

³Gunnar Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, The 1967 Wimmer Lecture, St. Vincent College, Latrobe, Pennsylvania (New York: Pantheon, 1969).

liberate himself from bias by recognizing the following factors:

1. The powerful heritage or earlier work in the field from which social and economic theories have branched off.
2. The influences of his own particular social milieu.
3. The influence of his own personality which is molded not only by tradition and environment, but also by his individual history, constitution and inclinations.⁴

For Myrdal, the bias the social scientist brings to his work is due to tradition, environment and his own personality; these biases must be corrected since they can predetermine his research and lead to faulty knowledge.⁵

The naiveté of the social scientist in regard to the influence of tradition, environment and personality, and the barrier they erect to the acquisition of "objective" truth never ceases to amaze Myrdal. In Asian Drama, he points out that while social scientists are concerned with "human behavior and motivation regardless of profession, social class or geographical location," they have neglected and remained naive about the "peculiar behavior" of their own

⁴Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁵Implicit in Myrdal's work is a subtle distinction between bias and prejudice. Bias indicates an inclination or preference, whereas prejudice is derogatory and denotes injury to others as a result of ignorant action.

profession. The social scientist acknowledges that even in their economic choices, people are conditioned by their total make-up and environment. Yet the "scientific man" is thought to be conditioned by nothing except his desire to discover the true nature of reality.⁶

Myrdal contends that if the social scientist is to arrive at objective knowledge, he must avoid systemic bias in his research and seek logical means of assuring methodological objectivity. Even though sociological theories have their roots in value perspectives, this does not destroy the quest for objectivity for Myrdal. He maintains that the data gathered within the perspective of one approach may force the modification and the theoretical broadening of other approaches.⁷ Thus Myrdal discerns a movement toward an increasingly reliable body of empirical fact and a parallel development of a more inclusive and more objective theoretical frames of reference. Objective knowledge is thus placed in its proper context of assumption, presupposition, and value commitment of the men who are the knowers, as well as being anchored in the realm of empirical fact.⁸

⁶Myrdal, Asian Drama, I, p. 6.

⁷Gunnar Myrdal, "The Relation between Social Theory and Social Policy," British Journal of Sociology, IV (September, 1953), pp. 230-235.

⁸Ibid., pp. 235-237.

Like many economists of his generation in Sweden, Myrdal was an interventionist and was interested in social reform. He had different views on policy than his elders, and came to regard the dominant economic methodology as part metaphysical and pseudo-objective. He branded as "naïve empiricism" the implicit belief that there existed a body of scientific knowledge acquired independently of valuations. Myrdal states:

Facts do not organize themselves into concepts and theories by being looked at; indeed except within the framework of concepts and theories,⁹ there are no scientific facts, but only chaos.

The basic assumption underlying Myrdal's methodological approach is that in western civilization not only social scientists but people in general want to be rational. Myrdal distinguishes between two types of conceptions about reality. He labels as beliefs those concepts which are intellectual and cognitive, and express our ideas about the actual reality; and "valuations" which are emotional and volitive, and express our notions of how reality ought to be or has been.¹⁰

Since beliefs purport to be about knowledge, Myrdal

⁹Gunnar Myrdal, The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory, trans. by Paul Streeten from the German (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. ix-xvi. (Originally published in Sweden, 1929; paperback edition, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969).

¹⁰Myrdal, An American Dilemma, pp. 1027-1030.

holds it is possible to test their conformity with reality; however, valuations cannot be judged by the same criteria. Part of the problem in judging valuations is that they are usually shifting and contradictory. As a generalization founded on empirical observation, Myrdal accepts the thesis that general valuations felt to be valid in relation to a whole nation or even to all human beings are morally "higher" than those relating to particular individuals or groups.¹¹

Value Conflict

In An American Dilemma, Myrdal demonstrated how in actual life people may subscribe to values on one plane, but still have conflicting valuations on other planes. He found that too often valuations are presented as beliefs about reality. In treating valuations as knowledge beliefs, people arrive at rationalizations which attempt to "objectify" valuations. This method allows people to justify their beliefs. This methodology also serves the purpose of compromising the underlying valuation. These beliefs tend to be opportunistic.

This was evident in the racial attitudes in the South, which construed the American creed as an exclusively white concern. In fact, many white Southerners argued that slavery was necessary to establish equality and liberty for the whites. Thus, a social system was built up in the South

¹¹Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, p. 19.

based on an over-idealized conception of the old Athenian democracy. As Myrdal stated, "the race doctrine of biological inequality between whites and Negroes offered the most convenient solution" to the ideological problem concerning the place of the Negro in southern society.¹²

As Myrdal saw it, the race dogma was retained in the South as a justification of the caste system which succeeded slavery as the social organization of Negro-white relations. Myrdal found in 1944 that the average white Southerner not only defended the cause of the South in the Civil War, but used the race dogma to defend the caste system that still existed in the South:

This psychological unity of defense is one strong reason, among others, why the generally advanced assertion is correct that the slavery tradition is a tremendous impediment in the way of improvement of the Negro's lot.¹³

Myrdal reported that with the dawn of the twentieth century, the heavily prejudiced position of science on the race problem was beginning to be undermined. For a long time American scientists operated with bias and expected to find innate inferiority in the Negro. The research investigating susceptibilities to specific diseases on the part of the Negro completely ignored environmental factors. The

¹²Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 87.

¹³Ibid., p. 89.

early research on intelligence assumed and reinforced the false belief that the Negro was intellectually inferior to the white man. Improved techniques in anthropology and psychology began to disprove statements on Negro physical and psychic traits. In America, social scientists and psychologists had increasingly given more weight to the role of environment than that of heredity. However, popular conceptions on race lagged behind scientific concepts. The fact that the Jensen Report¹⁴ could be published in the Harvard Review and create such a furor in academic circles, indicates that the environmental-genetics issue is far from resolved.

Myrdal pointed out that often the correct observation that the Negro was socially and economically inferior was related to the equally correct notion that man belongs to the biological universe, and twisting logic the incorrect deduction was made that the inferiority was biological in nature. Again, Myrdal reaffirms his faith in man's better nature, by explaining that it is very difficult for the ordinary man to envisage clearly how such factors as bad housing and malnutrition can actually "deform the body and the soul of people." The tradition born in slavery and

¹⁴Arthur R. Jensen, "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement," Harvard Educational Review, XXXIX (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 1-123.

nourished by the caste system confirmed this sincere but erroneous conception. The racist tradition was perpetuated to a degree by education, particularly in the South.¹⁵

According to Myrdal, one of the more important factors in the persistent prejudice against the Negroes is that visible characteristics, such as color and facial contour, have a tendency to overshadow the less visible characteristics, and tend to solidify the belief that there are great physical differences between the races. The cultural lag and the disparity of social achievement between the races tended to intensify the belief of racial inferiority. This, coupled with the effects of Darwinian evolutionism, according to Myrdal, led to the assumption that culture is transmitted through the genes and, therefore, the intelligence of the Negro race cannot be improved beyond a given level. This assumption had important educational consequences since it provided one of the rationales for the inferior facilities and staffs in Negro schools. In a sense, it also revealed the white man's miseducation. In his insistence upon the lack of culture and achievement of the Negroes in Africa as one of the bases for his beliefs of the inherent inferiority of the Negro, the miseducated

¹⁵Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 98.

white revealed his own ignorance of history and the social sciences.

This theory of biological inferiority supported the white man's belief that the Negro was incorrigible. As a result, the Negro was kept in a type of slum existence, which, as Myrdal pointed out, has "left its imprint upon his body and soul which made it natural for the white man to believe in his inferiority."¹⁶ This, for Myrdal, is an example of the vicious circle and is a prime example of cumulative causation. This basic belief supported many educational practices, particularly in the South.

In order to rationalize and defend the caste system in the South, the ordinary white man then held the following statements to be true:

1. The Negro people belong to a separate race of mankind.
2. The Negro race has an entirely different ancestry.
3. The Negro race is inferior in as many capacities as possible.
4. The Negro race has a place in the biological hierarchy somewhere between the white man and the anthropoids.
5. The Negro race is so different both in ancestry and in characteristics, that all white peoples in America, in contradistinction to the Negroes, can be considered a homogeneous race.¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 103-105.

Despite the obvious opportunism of these beliefs, they had in many instances, served as a defense for the South in the whole system of race relations. Myrdal found that the strength of these beliefs was inversely related to the individual's level of education. These beliefs were also used as the main argument for discrimination in education. Myrdal stressed the fact that these beliefs were opportunistic, and that they served vested interests, and supported a way of life in the South.

One of the basic assumptions in Myrdal's study was the necessity and desirability of reducing the bias in white people's racial beliefs concerning Negroes. Myrdal's logical conclusion was to improve the Negro status, behavior, and characteristics, and thereby reduce white bias. "The impediment of the strategy was, of course, that white beliefs directly and indirectly were active forces in keeping the Negroes low--the vicious circle."¹⁸

An alternate approach presented by Myrdal, in an attempt to reduce the bias of the white man, was to rectify the ordinary white man's observations of the Negro, to show him the fallacy of generalizing from particulars, and to inform him of the errors he is making as a result of misinformation. This would, of course, be the task of education, and implici

¹⁸Ibid., p. 109.

in this approach would be the notion that the white man needs the education as well as the Negro. Myrdal again reaffirms his faith in man and echoes the Aristotelian idea that man by his nature seeks knowledge and truth:

It is principally through encouraging research and through exposing the masses of people to its results that a society can correct the false popular beliefs by objectivizing the material out of which beliefs are fabricated.¹⁹

In Population, A Problem for Democracy, his earliest discussion of population problems, Myrdal indicates that the dichotomy between private and public pronouncements requires examination. He suggests that this dichotomy be considered in social research when he asks this question: "What is the relationship of people's political attitudes toward the population problem and their personal attitudes as builders of families and bearers of children?" In subsequent discussions concerning population problems, Myrdal cites the conflict between publicly proclaimed views and private practice in regard to birth control as an inner moral conflict and by inference considers this type of conflict a worthy part of social research.²⁰

Myrdal's concern for consideration of inner moral

¹⁹Ibid., p. 110.

²⁰Gunnar Myrdal, Population, A Problem for Democracy, The Godkin Lectures, 1938 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), pp. 31-35. (Reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962).

conflict as endemic to social research culminated as one of the main themes in An American Dilemma. He regarded the American Negro problem as being "in the heart of the American." He saw the conflict between valuations on one hand and behavior on the other, and pointed out the need to close the gap between the two. He derived the title for his book from the "ever-raging conflict between the valuations preserved on the general plane" which he called the "American Creed," and the "Valuations of individual and group living." The fact that conflicting valuations were held in the same person was the essence of the moral situation for Myrdal. Behavior becomes a moral compromise for Myrdal when valuations are conflicting. Myrdal saw "the moral struggle going on within people and not only between them." This then is why the Negro Problem is An American Dilemma.²¹

Myrdal demonstrated in An American Dilemma the general tendency for beliefs to be distorted in order to rationalize valuations and behavior. In his research, he discovered that many white Southerners refused to announce their own personal endorsement of prevailing patterns of segregation and discrimination against Negroes. More often than not, according to Myrdal's findings, people would project their own valuations as other people's valuations,

²¹Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. LXXI.

citing "public opinion" as against racial change in the South.²² The problem of valuations and beliefs will be further explored in chapter three. However, the whole question is implicit in Myrdal's methodological approach. Due to the distortion of valuations and beliefs, the "psychological need for rationalization of valuations operating on the lower level," Myrdal claims that people have come to accept what he calls "stereotypes" or "popular theories." For Myrdal, these become important social facts which can and must be studied empirically. The question of race in America illustrates this hypothesis. As Myrdal views it, race itself is not the problem. The real problem is stereotyped popular theories which can, upon observation and investigation, be shown to be grossly false and often contradictory.²³

The thesis that valuations influence beliefs, which in turn tend to become opportunistic and usable for rationalization, indicates an important corollary for social research for Myrdal. He suggests that opinion research, with a clear differentiation between questions concerning almost pure valuations and those concerning beliefs, would throw light on the structure of valuations. Because beliefs can

²²Ibid., pp. 1137-1139.

²³Ibid., pp. 83-112.

be judged by the objective criteria of correctness and completeness, it is possible in research to find the direction and the degree of the deviation of beliefs from objective knowledge.²⁴

It is Myrdal's opinion that this direction and degree of deviation would indicate how people are attempting to escape a confrontation of lower level valuations implicit in their daily behavior and the more general valuations held as morally higher in our society. Thus it would follow that it is important to chart quantitatively people's knowledge and ignorance on controversial issues. This could be accomplished by purging as far as possible all explicit valuations from research questions in opinion studies. If opinion polls were conducted in this manner, they might prove more valuable than they are in their present journalistic role. The hypothesis that Myrdal draws is as follows:

We almost never face a random lack of knowledge. Ignorance, like knowledge, is purposefully directed. An emotional load of valuation conflicts presses for rationalization, creating blindness at some spots, stimulating an urge for knowledge at others, and, in general, causing conceptions of reality to deviate from truth in determined directions.²⁵

As Myrdal witnesses the spectacle of our rationalistic civilization, he notes that people want to appear consistent in their opinions and want reasons for them. Consequently,

²⁴Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, pp. 25-27.

²⁵Ibid., p. 29.

they masquerade their valuations as beliefs, which then become distorted. Conversely, however, there is also an influence exerted by beliefs, and particularly by changes in beliefs, upon valuations. Observation has led Myrdal to the conclusion that people are subjectively honest and seek consistency. The correction of beliefs exerts pressure on people to change their valuations to such a degree that they can present to themselves and to others what they feel to be consistent opinions, which now must include the corrected beliefs. Myrdal sees in this adjustment a weakening of the valuations on the lower level and a change to greater conformity with those on the higher level.²⁶ The correction of beliefs as a means to changing values has important educational implications, which will be discussed in chapter six.

As a result of a major alteration in the perception of reality, a combined intellectual and moral catharsis occurs in regard to both beliefs and valuations. Myrdal contemplates the beginning of such a catharsis in the American poverty issue which was forcibly raised by the late President Kennedy, and which resulted in what Myrdal termed the "pathetic declaration of unconditional war on poverty"

²⁶Myrdal, An American Dilemma, pp. 110-112.

by President Johnson. In this same vein, a catharsis concerning beliefs and valuations about the Negro is emerging as prejudice is equated with ignorance. When the prejudiced person retains some of his derogatory beliefs about Negroes which have become stratified in stereotypes and complex theories, it is only at the price of displaying to others that he is uneducated. He then finds it difficult to maintain his prejudiced opinions, including some of his valuations at the lower level:²⁷

It is also my considered opinion, reached after careful study,⁶ that the important changes in race relations now slowly taking place in America are to a considerable extent the result of the sociologists' exposure of the stereotyped superstitions present about the Negro in the popular mind; it is becoming more and more difficult for people to preserve their defensive rationalizations without appearing uneducated, which they are reluctant to do.²⁸

As earlier false beliefs have served a purpose and satisfied a need, we should not be surprised, however, that their correction meets resistance. People can simply refuse to accept correction and can, at least for a time, stick tenaciously against evidence to their false beliefs. Myrdal suggests that a fertile field for comprehensive, systematic and conclusive research is the demonstration of how the

²⁷Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, pp. 32-34.

²⁸Myrdal, "The Relation between Social Theory and Social Policy," p. 216.

rectification of false beliefs, through education and mass information, can influence opinions underlying valuations, and resulting behavior.²⁹ Consideration should also be given to the importance of various formal and informal social organizations that educate people by trying to get them to accept more correct beliefs and to scale down their prejudices. However, other organizations, particularly on the local level, support resistance to change by providing the individual with assurance that he is not alone in clinging to his⁶ prejudiced opinions and behavior. Myrdal's observation is supported by the spectacle of the local school control in lily-white neighborhoods that actively prevent social and racial integration.

Myrdal's Valuational Relativism

In An American Dilemma, Myrdal implies that by the cumulative effect of circular causation, it would be natural for race prejudice to spread and grow more intense:

We shall assume a general interdependence between all the factors in the Negro problem. White prejudice and discrimination keep the Negro low in standards of living, health, education, manners and morals. This, in its turn gives support to white prejudice. White prejudice and Negro standards thus mutually "cause" each other.³⁰

In this analysis Myrdal touched on a variant of an enigma

²⁹Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, p. 35.

³⁰Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 75.

that has puzzled philosophers for thousands of years; the problem of Good and Evil. He quoted Hobbes who pointed out that the wisest and most virtuous men will hardly leave a print on the sand behind him, while an imbecilic crank or criminal can set fire to the whole world. Why then is the world, at least over long periods progressing, and not steadily and rapidly morally deteriorating? Myrdal, like Hobbes, found an answer in the state, albeit Myrdal's state was democratic.³¹

Myrdal admits that the state is made of and controlled by people who are frequently prejudiced and self-seeking. Often these people suffer from personality and social dislocations that affect the individual's behavior and their valuations on the lower level. However, Myrdal sees people in the democratic state thinking and acting within their formal institutions, as permitting their higher valuations on the general level to come to consciousness and extend their influence. He refers to this as "a theory of self-healing that applies to the society we call democracy." Besides their direct effects on citizen's behavior, legislation and administration always have the indirect effects

³¹Gunnar Myrdal, Value in Social Theory: A Selection of Essays on Methodology, ed. by Paul Streeten (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1969), pp. 192-194. (First published in London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).

of propagandizing for certain ideals. The same is true of decisions, regulations and declarations of other formal institutions. In adhering to their ideals, institutions have a pertinacity matched only by their considerable flexibility in local and temporary accommodation. In An American Dilemma, this theory was applied to the American race problem, but it has validity for Myrdal in all problems of social life.³² Conversely, Myrdal points to the present situation in America where the two developments of warfare in Vietnam and race riots at home are instances where the State has been instrumental in lowering rather than raising moral standards.³³

Myrdal acknowledges that education sponsored, directed and financed by the State and other formal institutions may for a time give support to opportunist and false beliefs. However, long-range observation is indicative of education as a force correcting these beliefs. Myrdal envisioned social science as a "spur behind education, providing a spur to its long-range trend towards rationalism."³⁴

³²Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, p. 15; see Rich Lands and Poor, pp. 39-47.

³³J. R. Maskin, "In Stockholm Gunnar Myrdal Talks about the American Conscience," Look Magazine, XXXII (December 24, 1968), pp. 32-36.

³⁴Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, p. 40.

I have to note with regret how in recent decades economists and social scientists generally have shown a tendency to abandon the tradition, adhered to through generations by even the greatest scholars, that they have a responsibility for the formation of public opinion. They are increasingly addressing only each other I should make the qualification that even in our time there have been a few professors, like Alvin Hanson and Kenneth Galbraith, who have devoted time to enlightening the general public and then not evaded, but sought out, the issues of needed economic and social reform.³⁵

Myrdal credits the Age of Enlightenment with making it possible for the social sciences to liberate themselves from all influences other than observations of reality and analysis of observations in rational terms. As a concomitant to this liberation was the fact that higher valuations were made supreme. For Myrdal, this was an advance since the higher valuations have less responsibility for distorting beliefs than do the lower valuations. As a corollary to this, even if one begins with views distorted opportunistically on a particular problem, the pursuit of social research itself will gradually correct these views. This then is the power of self-healing of the social sciences.³⁶

The great tradition in the social sciences, and particularly in economics has been for social scientists to

³⁵Gunnar Myrdal, "The Social Sciences and Their Impact on Society," At the occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary Celebration of the School of Applied Social Sciences, Western Reserve University (Cleveland, Ohio: September 29 to October 1, 1966), p. 16. (Mimeographed).

³⁶Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, pp. 40-42.

take a direct as well as an indirect responsibility for popular education. Any diminishing of this tradition for Myrdal would tend to false scientism, and a negation of responsibility of the social scientist for forming public opinion to make people more rational. He warns against the tendency apparent in recent decades for social scientists to close themselves off from the general public via the use of unnecessarily elaborate terminology.³⁷ As a prelude for eliminating bias in research, Myrdal advocates keeping to the higher valuations, and assigning prime importance to observed facts. However, as Myrdal has stated, man is not an automaton or a machine. Due to his cultural and political milieu and his own personality, even with the best of intentions, there is what Myrdal refers to as a "systematic bias" in our (social scientists') work.³⁸ Thus there is a need for a systematic attempt to purge biases from research.

This notion of the necessity for eliminating biases in research was the rationale behind Myrdal's earliest work. In his The Political Elements in the Development of Economic Theory, Myrdal analyzed the systematic biases in classical

³⁷Myrdal, "The Social Sciences and Their Impact on Society," pp. 15-18.

³⁸Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, p. 44. This was restated by Myrdal in Rich Lands and Poor, pp. 137-138; Asian Drama, pp. 1-3.

and neoclassical economic theory. In this work, he advanced his hypothesis that the metaphysical moral philosophers of natural law and utilitarianism had an important influence in the development of economic theory. This type of mental conditioning resulted in a bias in that the term "unemployment" was not commonly used until late in the nineteenth century, though as Myrdal noted, unemployment was in fact frequently very high.

When Myrdal began his study of the controversial Negro problem in America, he came upon the full realization of the extent to which biases were to him a problem of primary importance in research. In his study of Southeast Asia, he found the bias endemic to what he called the modern approach almost incapacitating. Here again, the systematic biases operating in research on the development problems in South Asia gained their strength from the fact that the "modern approach" is opportunistic, satisfying the wishes of both radicals and conservatives in the region. It is also opportunistic for people in the rich western countries.

When he started Asian Drama, Myrdal was not aware of the extremely frail basis for factual knowledge about the

³⁹Myrdal, The Political Elements in the Development of Economic Theory, pp. 1-22.

South Asian region. He found that most of the figures so confidently quoted in the literature, such as those pertaining to trends in income, population, literacy, and school enrollment proved upon inspection to be purely crude guesses, often untenable. Of all the countries where statistical information was available, India proved to have the most reliable data, but even here, statistics could only be quoted with tongue in cheek.⁴⁰ Myrdal's concern with the lack of valid statistical information was upheld by Sargent,⁴¹ Laska,⁴² and others.

Myrdal found that many of the accepted concepts and theories commonly used in analyzing the problems of the underdeveloped countries in South Asia broke down when criticized from the point of view of their logical consistency, that is their adequacy to reality. Therefore, the main concern of his study was methodological--how to cleanse concepts, discard theories and then state problems in a logical and realistic way. He maintained that a major vehicle for introducing serious biases into research on South Asian

⁴⁰Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. xi.

⁴¹Sir John Sargent, Society, Schools and Progress in India (New York: Pergamon, 1968).

⁴²John Laska, Planning and Educational Development in India (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968).

problems has been the uncritical application of concepts and theories that have been developed in, and have validity for, another region or group of countries, that is, the rich western or Communist countries. Throughout his work, he tested this hypothesis and illustrated the many severely biased preconceived notions contained in the literature concerning the problems under discussion.

According to Myrdal, little interest was evidenced in the underdeveloped countries of South Asia until after the Second World War. This lack of interest among social scientists, particularly economists, in the extreme poverty and economic stagnation in the underdeveloped countries and in their problems of economic development clearly reflected the existing world political situation. Gradually, however, the climate has changed, and the shift of emphasis to concern for the poverty and misery of the masses in South Asia can in large measure be attributed to political expediency. International tensions culminating in the cold war brought the western world to grips with the reality of exploding populations in large areas of the world that could become a threat to our security. Myrdal believes the intellectuals in these countries understand that the giving of aid to and the interest in their countries was due largely to world tensions.⁴³

⁴³Myrdal, Asian Drama, pp. 14-17.

It became obvious to Myrdal that the studies of the problems of underdeveloped countries are now undertaken, not with the view to the universal and timeless values, but with a view to the narrow political or narrower still, military-strategic interests of one state or bloc of states. Various types of studies have been justified by their contribution to the "security" of western countries (for example, in the best interests of the United States). Myrdal concludes that a major source of bias in much economic research on poor countries is the endeavor to treat their internal problems from the point of view of the western political and military interest in saving them from Communism.⁴⁴ (One would wonder to what extent the research regarding social problems in our own country has been affected by self-seeking groups).

Myrdal pointed out that the political influences on western social research do not usually encourage unkind treatment of underdeveloped countries--as long as they are not hopelessly lost to the enemy bloc. The tendency to think and act in a diplomatic manner when dealing with the problems of the underdeveloped countries of South Asia had in the new era of independence become a counterpart of the "white man's burden" in colonial times, and created the

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 13.

necessity to "bend over backwards" (in Freudian parlance the "guilt" complex). Not only politicians but also scholars, who should be interested in objective truth, apologize for making slightly derogatory remarks and suggestions about conditions in other countries. As a result, such discretion leads to avoidance of certain problems and deliberate understatement of negative findings in research literature. Diplomacy of this kind is tantamount to condescension, while to speak frankly is to treat the nationals of these countries as equals.⁴⁵

As research must, of necessity, start from a theory, a set of analytical preconceptions, the utilization of the tools and models that were forged in the West went against Myrdal's grain. The main theme of his methodological approach in Asian Drama was that the use of western theories, models, and concepts in the study of economic problems in the South Asian countries is a cause of bias seriously distorting any study of the region. A case in point is that the neat division of income into two parts, consumption and saving, is realistic in western societies where the general levels of income and a stratified system of income redistribution by social security policies and other means have largely abrogated any influence of conception on productivity. This is not the case in the underdeveloped countries of South Asia.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 17-18.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 19-20.

Myrdal's critical analysis of much of the research in South Asia centered around the preconceived theories and the biases underlying much of the theoretical framework of these analyses. Myrdal is concerned with biases because they lead to a false perception of reality and to faulty policy conclusions. They also impair the power of the social sciences to purge distorted and false popular beliefs, which Myrdal characterizes as the role of these sciences in our society. He came to the conclusion that biases in social science research tend to be opportunistic, and may for a time, distort popular beliefs. When this occurs social science does not serve its function.

The political climate has an undue influence on social science research, which Myrdal tends to equate with expediency. As a group becomes politically potent, for example the Negro in America, the government, universities, foundations, and individual scholars hop on the bandwagon in their research programs. For Myrdal, this political conditioning of the direction of research could be a rational method of adjusting to the needs of society. He laments the fact that the professional social scientist does not have the "foresight to read the writing on the wall," and

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 19-20.

society is usually taken by surprise by events.⁴⁷

The approaches, that is the concepts, models, and theories, used in research provide another type of conditioning which even lead to more blatant biases in research. Another source of bias in relation to the research in South Asian countries is in the imposition of western models on another culture.⁴⁸ Myrdal envisioned all sorts of extraneous influences or biases on research approaches. If research is undertaken with the national interest primary:

The most perceptible political influence on the research approach in western countries to the problems of South Asian countries is the predominant role given to considerations of national power and international power relations The implication is, however, that studies of the problems of underdeveloped countries are now undertaken, not with a view to the universal and timeless values that are our legacy from the Enlightenment, but with a view to the fortuitous and narrower political or, narrower still military-strategic interests of one state or bloc of states. All sorts of studies are now justified by, or focused on, their contribution to the "security" of western countries.⁴⁹

The mechanism of biased research in the social sciences due to the concealing of valuations does not differ from the biases in popular thinking. Biases in social research cannot be eliminated simply by "keeping to the facts,"

⁴⁷Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, pp. 48-50.

⁴⁸Myrdal, Asian Drama, pp. 8-12.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 73.

According to Myrdal:

Biases are thus not confirmed to the practical and political conclusions drawn from research. They are much more deeply seated than that. They are the unfortunate results of concealed valuations that insinuate themselves into research at all stages, from its planning to its final presentation. As a result of their concealment, they are not properly sorted out and can thus be kept undefined and vague.⁵⁰

Myrdal recognizes that the scientist is not unlike the ordinary layman, and is more or less entangled in the same web of conflicts. The scientist like the layman is influenced by the psychological need for rationalizations. Myrdal does not ignore the executives who are responsible for other people's research. He noted that generally speaking, the scientists in any particular institution and political setting move as a flock, reserving their controversies and particular originalities for matters that do not call into question the fundamental system of biases they share.⁵¹

The Political Elements in the Development of Economic Theory was for Myrdal an exercise in detecting biases. He found logical flaws in economic theory because of the unstated value premises:

The value premises cannot be established arbitrarily; they must be relevant and significant for the society in which we live. To begin with, they must be made

⁵⁰Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, p. 52.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 52-53.

concrete in terms of economic attitudes actually pursued by groups of people, and of real human attitudes to social processes. Under no circumstances should the value premises in realistic research be represented by the sort of general and abstract principles of which economists in our great tradition of natural law and utilitarianism avail themselves to bridge the gulf between objective science and politics.⁵²

For Myrdal a "disinterested" social science has never and can never exist. One of the basic assumptions in his research is that every study of a social problem, however limited in scope, "is and must be determined by valuations."⁵³ In his "quest for "objectivity" in the theoretical analysis, it is necessary to make the value premises explicit.

In order to strive for "objectivity" . . . is to expose the valuations to full light, make them conscious, specific and explicit, and permit them to determine the theoretical research.⁵⁴

Myrdal does not subscribe to the notion that value-loaded terms can be avoided. He sees no panacea in preventing biases by substitution of terms not associated with valuation, since by "logical necessity valuation permeates all research from beginning to end." Thus Myrdal rejects the thesis held by some that the road to objectivity is to purge research of all valuations and value-loaded terms in

⁵²Myrdal, The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory, p. viii.

⁵³Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, p. 54; see An American Dilemma and Asian Drama.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 56; see An American Dilemma and Asian Drama.

the beginning of consideration of a social problem.⁵⁵ He even brings to task those who would employ algebraic formulas and other symbols which only facilitate the escape from stating clearly implied assumptions, and from being aware of the valuation load of main concepts.⁵⁶

The concept "underdeveloped countries," . . . affords an example of a "value-loaded" concept. The term "underdeveloped countries," as well as its use to express a concept in scientific analysis, are of fairly recent origin. In the literature before the Second World War, the static term "backward regions" was thus commonly used to characterize the geographical areas, and the peoples living there, whose intellectuals now conceive of them dynamically, as "underdeveloped" countries and nations, i.e., with the political implication that they should develop.⁵⁷

In regard to selection of value premises for social science research, Myrdal insists on realism. That is, the value premises chosen must be founded on people's actual valuations.

We may start our discussion by considering what "realism" in this sense would imply *prima facie*. The principle of selection of value premises should be their relevance, determined by the actual valuations of persons and groups in society. Within the

⁵⁵Myrdal, The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory, p. vii.

⁵⁶Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, pp. 57-59; see An American Dilemma, p. 61, and "Value-Loaded Concepts," Money, Growth and Methodology and Other Essays in Economics in Honor of Johan Akerman (Sweden: Lund, C.W.K. Gleirups Bokforlog, 1961), pp. 273-288.

⁵⁷Myrdal, "Value-Loaded Concepts," p. 282.

circle of relevance so determined there is an even smaller circle of significance taken to denote valuations held by substantial groups of people or by small groups with substantial power.⁵⁸

A society can be studied from the viewpoint of relevance and significant valuation in another society. Realization of the value premises must be feasible. They should be judged unfeasible only after a study of the facts. This is another example in which the value premises are not a priori independent of research. This theoretical criticism in terms of feasibility is indeed one of the most important tasks of social science.⁵⁹

As Myrdal has pointed out, existing opinion studies do not meet the requirements for scientific basis for determining the valuations of society. Therefore, the social scientist is forced to utilize impressionistic observations and speculation. Myrdal has posed a solution for this problem.⁶⁰ He admits to the difficulty that must be surmounted in exposing people's real valuations. For him, the primary difficulty lies in the fact that valuations are inextricably bound with beliefs. According to Myrdal's schema, the researcher is further burdened with the following:

⁵⁸Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, p. 65.

⁵⁹Myrdal, Asian Drama, pp. 50-51.

⁶⁰Supra, p. 57.

1. beliefs influence valuations just as valuations influence beliefs,
2. the scientist should use the valuations people would have if their beliefs were correct and not distorted,
3. valuations to be used as value premises should most often refer to a future situation.⁶¹

A more fundamental difficulty springs from the fact that valuations are conflicting. As Myrdal points out in An American Dilemma, conflicts rage within individuals who live in moral conflicts and compromises. However, Myrdal does not see the relation of valuations to more correct beliefs, the long-term validity of valuations in the future and the allowance for valuation conflicts as insurmountable.⁶²

The equality doctrine, as Myrdal perceives it, is not merely an abstract formula but an expression of a living ideal and as such, a part of social reality, in other words, a valuation. This is a valuation that is actually perceived by people to be morally right. This then is an important political fact, and as such, Myrdal deems it necessary to consider it in social research. Myrdal views as paradoxical the economic inequality which society has tolerated through the ages,

⁶¹Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, pp. 66-67; see An American Dilemma and Asian Drama.

⁶²Myrdal, An American Dilemma, pp. 10-63 and Asian Drama, pp. 51-57.

and the "sanctuary people have maintained in their minds of the lofty ideal that is expressed by the equality doctrine."⁶³

A related problem of importance for social research and reform, in addition to the dichotomy between egalitarianism in principle and acceptance of a very inegalitarian society in practice, is the relative importance of nature and nurture. Myrdal views the relative importance of nature and nurture as a question of facts, and therefore, beliefs in regard to these problems can be proved to be true or false via research. Admittedly, Myrdal does not consider these beliefs as valuations, but the whole issue of nature versus nurture is basic to the environmental approach, without which the egalitarian principles lose much of their practical sense for Myrdal.⁶⁴

Myrdal has stated that valuations, unlike beliefs, cannot be judged by the criteria of truth and completeness, because valuations are subjective.⁶⁵ Even though this implies what some might call "value relativism," Myrdal argues that this is not an inhibition or obstacle to arguing

⁶³Myrdal, Rich Lands and Poor, pp. 109-114.

⁶⁴Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research, p. 93.

⁶⁵Supra, p. 47.

a moral point of view. Myrdal theorized that no social science can ever be "neutral" or simply "factual" because research is always by logical necessity based on moral and political valuations. As he sees it, argumentation in moral and political terms will be stimulated and greatly facilitated when conventional social science drops its false claim of being able to ascertain relevant and significant facts, and even reach practical conclusions without explicit value premises. Myrdal does not equate value relativism with moral nihilism. Myrdal believes that the traditional and still conventional tendency in social research to be "pseudo-objective" and to conceal the value premises implicit in a particular approach has weakened it as an intellectual and moral force in our society. He sees social improvement as dependent upon social research becoming more effective in serving the purpose of intellectual and moral catharsis by coming out in the open with its basic valuations.

Though Myrdal's methodological analysis is based on "valuation relativism," he acknowledges that certain moral principles on the "highest" level of generality are common for different historical epochs and even for different civilizations. The respect for human life, for example, is

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 73-76.

an example of a supreme moral principle which prevails even though difficulties are encountered in its practical application:

In facing up to their population problems and striving to formulate an appropriate policy, the South Asian countries are bound by one rigid value premise, any attempt to depress population growth is restricted to work on the fertility factor All that can reasonably be done to combat disease and prevent premature death must be done, regardless of the effect on population growth The value premise is here presented for what it is; a moral imperative.⁶⁷

In The Political Element and other works, Myrdal sketches the historical development of the general moral principle of egalitarianism which is at the very base of modern economic and social theory. Myrdal demonstrates how this principle goes far back in mankind's history, and maintains itself on the level of a supreme ideal through untold centuries of blatant inequality and oppression. The theme of the paradox of the egalitarian principle and the lack in reality of the realization of that ideal permeates most of Myrdal's writings.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Myrdal brings to his research methodology the expertise of the economist and the sociologist, but he does

⁶⁷Myrdal, Asian Drama, p. 1496.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 103-113; 749-756.

not ignore the historical aspects of social problems. In his quest for the facts of human thought and achievements as the raw material which any social scientist must explain, Myrdal went to the historical record and made use of what he found there. Myrdal's view is colored by his economic and sociological interests. Therefore, he presents history as a series of cultural influences and ideas. His historical treatment in An American Dilemma provided valid evidence that the Negro has not in the past fared too well in America. In Asian Drama, he described one continent's battle for a better future as a war waged against the deadly shadows of the past. The processes of the present are understood and explained by Myrdal in the context of their historical development. In no way, however, does he assume that the past is prologue to the future.

Myrdal, in the tradition of Comte, Spencer, and Durkheim,⁶⁹ stressed the importance of analyzing the relationships among institutions and between them and their setting. He accentuated intellectual cross-fertilization and the interdisciplinary approach in research. Myrdal, in

⁶⁹Emile Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, 8th ed., ed. by S. Solovay and trans. by J. Mueller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), pp. 128-142.

the company of contemporary sociologists, challenges the position that a value-free or politically neutral sociology is possible.⁷⁰ Myrdal addressed himself brilliantly to this issue in an article on "Social Theory and Social Policy" when he said "We need viewpoints, and they presume valuations. A disinterested social science is from this viewpoint pure nonsense. It never existed, and it will never exist."⁷¹

Myrdal is not original in his concern about the role of biases in social research. The attempt to establish so-called "objective truth" was commented on by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. The Webbs were aware of their own extremely strong personal biases about the society in which they lived. The Webbs commented as follows:

Most people, without being aware of it, would much rather retain their own conclusions than learn anything contrary to them Most beginners do not realize that a good half of most research consists in an attempt to prove yourself wrong. It is a law of the mind that, other things being equal, those facts which seem to bear out his own preconceived view of things will make a deeper impression on the student than those which seem to tell in the opposite direction.⁷²

⁷⁰Robert S. Lynd, Knowledge for What? The Place of Social Science in American Culture (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964).

⁷¹Myrdal, "Relation between Social Theory and Social Policy," p. 242.

⁷²Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Methods of Social Study (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932), p. 36.

While Myrdal may not be innovative in his methodological approach, he has synthesized the best of the past and put his own brand on a carefully developed methodology of methodology; a critical theory that criticizes itself. In The Political Element, it is suggested that if economic theory were stripped of its implicit valuations, a corpus of hard facts and relations would remain that could then be successfully harnessed to any set of valuations explicitly introduced from sociological and psychological^s research. In his later writings, the epistemological approach gains ground and the structural interdependence of valuations and facts is presented as a necessary condition for all theory and research. Myrdal stressed the endless give and take between theory and fact.

The valuations that should form the bases of social theories in Myrdal's schema are comparable to the complex of attitudes that unify a personality. The valuations are never "given" once and for all, but change under the strains and stresses to which their relations to each other and to experience give rise. Myrdal combines the need for the scientific analysis of society with the presence of the positive function of value clashes.

Myrdal rejects as "metaphysical nonsense" the a priori assumptions of natural law acquired independently of

all valuations. In this rejection of metaphysics and in his dictum of the critical necessity of concepts Myrdal echoes Kant, though he does not canonize the modern sciences in the Kantian mode. There is, however, an inescapable a priori element in all research for Myrdal. Questions must be asked before answers can be given and these questions are at bottom valuations.

CHAPTER III

VALUATIONS AND BELIEFS

Introduction

There is a close relationship between economics and philosophy, or at least there should be. The relationship between the two disciplines was very close at the inception of economics. It is a pity that, in general, philosophers have neglected economic analysis, and many economists have all but abandoned the theory of value in the Myrdalian sense. For Myrdal, problems can no longer be treated as exclusively philosophical, economic, or social. Problems raise complex issues for which there are no easy solutions. In order to study or analyze these problems, according to Myrdal's schema, it is necessary to recognize and to distinguish valuations from beliefs. It is this writer's view that it is not possible to describe a system or analyze a problem without moral judgments entering in. We cannot escape from making judgments that arise from the ethical preconceptions that have permeated our world view and have somehow been printed in our brain. We cannot escape from our own habits of thought. We can, however, follow Myrdal's lead, and find out what we value and try to see why. Since Freud uncovered our propensity to rationalization, and Marx showed how our ideas spring from ideologies, we have begun to ask, "why do I believe what I believe?".

The values of a group are part of its conventional wisdom. The values of the group differ from its beliefs in that, unlike the latter, their subject matter concerns the good life and how to come closer to it. The values of a group differ from its norms in that instead of specifying courses of action to be followed in certain circumstances, they prescribe goals for whose realization the group is ready to strive to achieve the anticipated benefits contained in the given end. Myrdal makes an important distinction between higher and lower plane goals: values on the higher plane are held collectively while those on the lower plane tend to be individualistic.¹

The American Creed

The American Creed, as Myrdal perceived it, is quite egalitarian and represents a value on the higher plane. He derived the title of An American Dilemma from the "ever-raging conflict between the valuations preserved on the general plane" (higher plane) which he called the American Creed, and the "valuations of individual group living," (lower plane). The American Creed in Myrdal's mind is the "unifying force in American life." As he views it, the American Creed is a "humanistic liberalism developing out of the epoch of Enlightenment, when America received its national consciousness and

¹Supra, Chapter two, p. 47.

its political structure." What makes the American Creed unique for Myrdal is that it is the most explicit set of ideals that any society has ever known. For example, these ideals are expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The main norms of the American Creed, as stated in these documents, are centered in the belief in equality and in the rights of liberty.²

There were two other equally important ideological roots of the American Creed, according to Myrdal. One of these was Christianity, with its patriotic myths which had important effects on the people. The other ideological influence behind the American Creed was English Law. Myrdal claims that the philosophical ideas of human equality and inalienable rights to life, liberty, and property, would not have flourished in America if they did not have such strong roots in English law.³

Myrdal holds that these ideological forces--the Christian religion and the English law--are contributing to the nearly "fetishistic cult of the Constitution." At this point, the writer takes issue with Myrdal's criticisms of the Constitution. One cannot deny that the Constitution is a limited and imperfect document that has been used on occasions to block the

²Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 8.

³Ibid., pp. 9-12.

popular will. While it is very difficult to alter or amend, there is much good in the Constitution. As a document, it has survived through the years and has functioned as a vehicle to protect the innocent as well as the guilty. Many of the shortcomings attributed to the Constitution are the fault of the law or the people who administer it. One has only to consider the ruling of the Supreme Court in the Brown case to observe the separation of powers of government as provided for in the Constitution. This decision, reversing a previous Supreme Court decision, outlawed "separate but equal" schools. The judicial branch of the government rendered a decision, the legislative branch enacted laws to comply with the court's decision, and the executive branch sought to enforce these laws. This is only an isolated example of a situation where the Constitution functions for the common good of all.

Myrdal drew attention to the gap between ideals and behavior in relation to the Creed, which has importance for Americans who have enacted it into law, but have not lived up to it in practice. Myrdal referred to a peculiar cultural trait of Americans in their low regard for, and even disrespect for law. He sees a "moralistic" attitude toward law in America, expressed in the common belief that there is a "higher law" behind and above the specific laws contained in the Constitution. This is evidenced today in the general

attitude that if a person views the law as unjust he can ignore it. This position has historical precedent and is strengthened by the almost complete silence of the citizen's duties in the American Creed.⁴ It is interesting to observe the cry being raised in America today against a judicial system that has been utilized in the protection of the landowner, business man, and the corporate entity. The judicial system or process has not changed, it is just being exploited by different groups, the youth, the poor, and the black.

American Creed as a Value Premise

Myrdal found a strong unity and basic stability in American valuations as expressed in the American Creed. For his study of the racial problem in America, Myrdal utilized the Creed as a value premise. He saw the Creed not only as a value premise, but also as one of the dominant "social trends" in America. For him, the American Creed represents the national conscience. It must be remembered that the Creed, even though it is a living reality in a developing democracy, is not a fixed and clear-cut dogma but is still growing. Myrdal focused on the Creed as American in the sense that it is adhered to by most Americans. He was quick to remind us that this creed is a common democratic one which expresses humane ideals that have matured in our common western

⁴Ibid., pp. 13-15.

civilization. In reality, the Creed is older and wider than America itself.⁵

Valuations and Beliefs

The task that confronted Myrdal in An American Dilemma was to determine social reality as it was. In following the theme that people define as the reality of their own situations, he wrote, "the interrelations between the material facts and people's valuations of and beliefs about these facts are precisely what makes the Negro a social problem." Myrdal sees danger in the assumption that "sound" research disregards the fact that people are moral beings who are struggling with their conscience. For this reason, Myrdal insists that every social investigation must investigate people's conflicting valuations and their opportunistic beliefs.⁶

Men have ideas about how reality actually is, or was, and they have ideas about how it ought to be, or ought to have been. The former we call beliefs and the latter we call valuations. A person's beliefs, that is his knowledge, can be objectively judged to be true or false and more or less complete. His valuations, that a social situation or relation is or was "just," "right," or "fair," cannot be judged by such objective standards as science provides. In their opinions,

⁵Myrdal, Value in Social Theory, p. 70.

⁶Ibid., p. 61.

people express both their beliefs and their valuations. Usually people do not distinguish between what they think they know and what they like or dislike.

Myrdal sees a close psychological interrelation between beliefs and valuations. People want to be rational, they also want to have reasons for the valuations they hold, and they usually express only those valuations for which they think they have reasons. To serve as opinions, specific valuations are selected, are formulated in words, and are motivated by acceptable reasons.⁶ Myrdal finds that most people's advertised opinions are, however, actually illogical and contain conflicting valuations skewed by beliefs about social reality. Myrdal also maintains that people's opinions are not indicative of expected behavior, and their opinions usually misrepresent actual motivation.⁷

Myrdal refuses to treat valuations as if they all existed on the same plane. When discussion takes the form of moral criticism (values on a higher plane) by one person or group of another group, this does not mean that the one claims to have certain valuations that the other does not have. Rather, this is an appeal to valuations which are assumed to be held in common. Myrdal accepts as valid the assumption that those with opposing opinions have valuations in common.

⁷Ibid., pp. 71-72.

As Myrdal observed in his introduction to An American Dilemma, the cultural unity in America consists in the fact that most Americans have most valuations in common, though they are arranged differently and have different intensity coefficients for different individuals and groups. This, of course, is what makes discussion possible and enables an understanding of and a response to criticism.

When inopportune valuations are exposed, an element of indecision and complication ensues. A need will be felt by the person or groups whose inconsistencies in valuations are publicly exposed to find the means of reconciling these inconsistencies. This can be accomplished according to Myrdal, by adjusting one of the conflicting pairs of valuations. If the valuation to be modified is on the less general plane, a greater moral harmony in the larger group is brought about. Myrdal maintains that specific attitudes and forms of behavior are inclined to be reconciled by the more general moral principles. When an attempt is made to change or reinterpret valuations which are more general in scope, and most of the time shared consciously with all other groups in society, Myrdal finds that the moral conflict of the deviating group becomes increasingly explicit.⁸

The temptation is often strong to deny the very

⁸Ibid., p. 74.

existence of a valuation conflict. This, in turn, results in what Myrdal calls "grossly distorted notions" about social reality. One can agree with Myrdal that this type of social ignorance is most adequately explained as an attempt to avoid the twinges of conscience. False beliefs could be rationalized opportunely into valuations in an age unhampered by scientific development and extensive education. Today, within our own society, Myrdal has observed these historical differentials among the different social layers representing varying degrees of education. He noted that alongside the extension of knowledge of minorities came a change in thinking among the educated. However, false ethnic and racial beliefs were nourished and preserved among the uneducated. As he analyzed the situation, people's awareness of inconsistencies in their own spheres of valuations tend to be enhanced during a process of growing intellectualism.⁹

It is only when people attempt to formulate their beliefs concerning the facts and their implications for some aspect of social reality that valuations are overtly expressed. Myrdal contends that beliefs concerning the facts are the building stones for the logical hierarchies of valuations into which a person tries to shape his opinions. Myrdal assumes that valuations are normally conflicting, and that beliefs

⁹Ibid., p. 75.

serve the function of bridging illogicalities. Beliefs then are not only determined by available scientific knowledge, but also are regularly "biased," by which Myrdal means that they are systematically twisted in the one direction which fits them best for the purposes of rationalization.¹⁰

Value Premises and the Negro Problem

Writing in 1944, Myrdal suggested that to the great majority of white Americans, the Negro problem had distinctly negative connotations. As he analyzed the situation, the problem was not generally viewed as a challenge to statesmanship, but rather as a menace to the society. The problem produced in many Americans an anxiety mingled with a feeling of individual and collective guilt. Many Americans held mutually inconsistent beliefs and attitudes which proved incompatible with the wider personal, moral, religious, and civil sentiments and ideas of the Creed.

Myrdal noted that in the pro-slavery thinking of the ante-bellum South, the southerners stuck to the American Creed as far as the whites were concerned. However, they argued that slavery was necessary in order to establish equality and liberty for the whites. The race doctrine of biological inequality between whites and Negroes offered the most convenient solution. After the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 76-77.

the Civil War, the race dogma was retained in the South as necessary to justify the caste system which succeeded slavery as the social organization of Negro-white relations.¹¹

Role of Values and Beliefs in Racial Discrimination

As Myrdal observed the feelings of white America concerning the Negro, he noted that the average opinion in regard to the Negro problem contained two elements which are of a very different character. First, there are beliefs concerning reality which can be true or untrue, complete or incomplete. And secondly, there are valuations of an actual or hypothetical reality which can vary in intensity, clarity, and homogeneity but in themselves are neither complete nor incomplete, neither true nor untrue. There are, of course, opinions which are only beliefs or only valuations. Usually, however, opinions are combinations of both; on the one hand, beliefs are nearly always influenced by the valuations for which they serve as rationalizations, and on the other hand, beliefs influence valuations. Myrdal's conclusions concerning the Negro problem in America were predicated on his theory of value and belief.¹²

In spite of the American Creed and its equalitarian

¹¹Myrdal, An American Dilemma, pp. 86-89.

¹²Myrdal, Value in Social Theory, pp. 85-87.

ideals, Myrdal showed in great detail in An American Dilemma how in the South a way of life had been built upon the segregation of the Negro people. Even the upper-class Negroes, the preachers, teachers, professionals, and businessmen were forced by dictates of the law to earn their living in what Myrdal calls "the backwater of discrimination." The denial of the existence of the Negro in discussion of public affairs lent a strange unreality to the situation, because as Myrdal contends, for generations hardly "any public issue of importance had been free from a heavy load of the race issue." The joking attitude towards Negroes is well known, and the stereotyped image of the Negro has been played up in literature and the entertainment world. Myrdal explained how this attitude toward and about the Negro served a dual function, particularly in the South. For the white, it is a way of "proving the inferiority of the Negro," and for the Negro, it is a "mechanism of psychological adjustment." As Myrdal suggests, this type of situation results in signs of deep-seated ambivalence. The South seemed to love and hate the Negro at the same time.¹³

As a result of these ambivalent feelings, the southerner has had to reach an accommodation with mental contradictions, and has often elaborated them into theories. Myrdal gave as an example of this type of theory that Negroes have "lower

¹³Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 38.

costs of living," which defends in the minds of the whites, the lower salaries for Negroes, which is in fact a violation of the equalitarian principles of the Constitution. Another example Myrdal used was the all-embracing Jim Crow doctrine--"equal but separate"--which belongs to the same category of systematized intellectual and moral inconsistency.¹⁴

The Negro problem in the South was directly or indirectly involved in the attitudes toward trade unionism, factory legislation, social security programs, educational policies, and virtually all other public issues. Myrdal did not assume insincerity on the part of the southerner but rather viewed these attitudes as "symptoms of much deeper unsettled conflict of valuations."¹⁵

To a degree, Myrdal attributed the remarkable lack of correct information about the Negroes and their living conditions to the formation of these attitudes. He did not view the extent of this ignorance as natural but rather as part of an opportunistic escape mechanism. Typical of these attitudes which were prevalent among the so-called educated classes, were the notions held by physicians concerning the frequency of disease among Negroes, and the beliefs of lawyers who thought practically all lynchings were a result of rape.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 40.

Labelling this the "convenience of ignorance," Myrdal found that facts were constantly twisted so that Negroes would be relegated to a low classification and whites to a high one. The fact that so many stereotyped ideas about the Negroes were found among the educated white southerners contradicts the common assumption that prejudice exists only among the poorly educated portion of the population. If the supposedly educated people were this far from the truth, what would one expect to find among the uneducated?

One would expect to find different racial attitudes in the South, due to the divergence of the South from the rest of the country. The South had, at the time of Myrdal's investigation, the bulk of the Negro population. Industrialization had lagged behind the rest of the country, and the South was more agricultural than urban. Historically, the spirit of aristocracy was much stronger in the South and most important of all, traditionally, education for all groups and all levels had been inferior in the South. Myrdal based his belief that the Negro problem had more importance in the South than in the North on two factors:

First it was the main determination of all local and regional and national issues in the South. Secondly there was a "solid" South backing the "wrongs" of segregation.¹⁶

The Negroes in the North face many problems, but the northern whites have been able to console themselves with the notion

¹⁶Ibid., p. 46.

that by comparison the Negro is better off in the North than in the South. In this regard Myrdal had this to say:

Meanwhile each of the guilty regions points to the other's sins--the South assuaging its conscience by the fact that the Negro problem is finally becoming national in scope, and the North that Negroes are much worse off in the South.¹⁷

If the white southerner was ignorant about the true condition of the Negro, then Myrdal saw his counterpart in the North. Myrdal found the younger generation of southern whites less indoctrinated against the Negro than their parents, but they also had less personal contact with him and, therefore, were farther away from him. Even among white intellectuals in the North, Myrdal saw a tremendous amount of ignorance of the true condition of the Negro. Although he seemed to view education as the vehicle by which some of this racial ignorance could be eradicated, he also leveled the charge that education had not been a vehicle for social change in America:

The simple fact is that an educational offensive against racial intolerance, going deeper than the reiteration of the "glittering generalities" in the nation's political creed, has never seriously been attempted in America.¹⁸

Myrdal is not the first, nor will he be the last to take this position. In America, the schools, the established

¹⁷Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 49.

formalized institutions for education, have traditionally maintained the status quo, and have functioned as an agency to pass on the cultural heritage. While the schools tend to be conservative, they have in some instances been used as instruments of change in the racial problem. Conservatism blocked any effective change and as a result, a bland indoctrination occurred. One only has to examine the "mint julep" editions of school textbooks to substantiate this statement.¹⁹

Current^g among theories concerning the Negro problem in America is the tendency to incorporate the problem into the broader concept of other American minority groups. As Myrdal reminds us, in addition to the cultural difference between the native-born and the foreign-born in the United States, there was always a class difference. The developing West offered a haven for the early immigrant groups. But as land filled up, the first stages of assimilation for the newly arrived took place in the worst slums of the nation. Undoubtedly, the American educational system can take some credit for this remarkable assimilation and Myrdal gives it its fair share of credit. However, it must be remembered these options were not open to the Negro.

¹⁹Hillel Black, The American Schoolbook (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1967), pp. 106-126.

There were other factors peculiar to America that kept the minority groups contented. The established American Creed, the increasing process of social mobility, and other factors coupled with education, allowed the unique assimilation of the different ethnic groups. Actually, the nation was divided into a dominant "American" group and a large number of minority groups and was permeated by animosities and prejudices attached to ethnic origin or what is popularly recognized as the "race" of a person.²⁰

That these ethnic groups have been successfully assimilated in the past gives the average American the belief that, as the generations pass on, the remaining minority groups will be assimilated. According to Myrdal:

In spite of all race prejudice, few Americans seem to doubt that it is the ultimate fate of this nation to incorporate without distinction most peoples . . . they see obstacles; they emphasize the religious and racial differences; they believe it will take a long time, but they assume it is going to happen and do not on the whole strongly have strong objections to it--²¹ provided it is located in the distant future.

Myrdal found, however, that the attitude towards the American Negro was vastly different, and took on a caste rather than a class aspect.²² The Negroes were commonly assumed to be

²⁰Myrdal, An American Dilemma, pp. 50-52.

²¹Ibid., p. 53.

²²Myrdal's use of the word "caste" indicates a prohibition against social mobility. The word "class" is used in the sense of a division in society which permits social mobility.

unassimilable, they have been set apart, and there was little effort directed toward "Americanizing" the Negro as there was with the other groups of alien origin.

As a methodological principle, Myrdal started out from the ordinary white man's notion of what constitutes the heart of the Negro problem. The reason for this is obvious, if we remember that Myrdal felt that the Negro problem was the white man's problem in America. The white American southerner held that the Negro was inferior and that amalgamation should be prohibited. Therefore, "racial" solidarity was a primary valuation according to Myrdal. There was a strong biological emphasis in the anti-amalgamation doctrine and there were strong social sanctions against intermarriage but not towards illicit miscegenation.

Although Myrdal had no data from scientifically controlled nationwide investigation to support his observations, he felt strongly that the opinion that the "Negro is unassimilable was held more commonly, absolutely, and intensely than would be assumed from a general knowledge of American thought-ways."²³ Myrdal felt that Americans sometimes hold a philosophical view that in the future, amalgamation will come; they look upon it as an inevitable deterioration. This is one of the bases for Myrdal's contention that the Negro

²³Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 58.

problem is not one of class but of "caste," and explains why the Negro in the past has not been successfully educated, or integrated into the national culture. The Negro has not become "Americanized" in the same sense as has the immigrant group.

Myrdal set up a "white man's theory" of color as caste as follows:

1. the concern for "race purity" is basic;
2. rejection of "social equality;"
3. the danger of miscegenation is so great that segregation and discrimination inherent in the refusal of "social equality" must be extended into nearly all spheres of life-- even including education.²⁴

Myrdal held that competitive economic interests also played a decisive role and, therefore, the concern for racial purity could not take on an exclusive role as the basic cause of the race problem.

Social mobility has been possible in the past for all groups except the Negroes in America. Segregation and discrimination sanctioned by law in the South has, in the past, prevented the Negro from the benefits inherent in the American Creed. Myrdal hypothesized that there was variation in the strength and order of the white man's discrimination, that certain issues took precedent over others. He used as an

²⁴Ibid.

organizing principle of his investigation, his hypothesis concerning the rank order of discriminations. For the white, the discriminations were held almost unanimously in the following rank, from highest to lowest:

1. bar against intermarriage and sexual intercourse involving white women;
2. etiquette, which specifically concerns behavior in personal relations in the narrow sense, the denial of social equality;
3. segregation and discrimination in use of public facilities such as schools, churches, and means of conveyance;
4. political^a disfranchisement;
5. discrimination in law courts, by the police and other public servants;
6. discrimination in securing land, credit, jobs, or other means of earning a living, including relief and welfare.²⁵

Myrdal further hypothesized that in the Negro's rank order there was an inverse relation of the Negro's rank order of discrimination, and that it was just about parallel to the white man's. This means that for both groups, white and black, education was about at the middle of the scale. While there has been some research on this, the results were not definitive. It would be interesting to test Myrdal's hypothesis under present social conditions in America.

There were obvious variations in the patterns of

²⁵Ibid., pp. 60-61.

discrimination between local communities, and these were not too important in the overall picture. What was significant for Myrdal, however, was the change in levels of discriminations between the South and the North.

As one moves from the Deep South, through the Upper South and the border states to the North, the manifestations of discrimination decrease in extent and intensity; at the same time the rules become more uncertain and capricious.²⁶

Without a doubt there was discrimination in the North, but it was kept hidden. The correlation between inferior education, prejudice, and discrimination was obvious in Myrdal's observations. While one cannot draw a causal relationship from correlation, it is safe to assume the inferior education of the South was one of the prominent factors of discrimination.

Myrdal offered a birdseye view of historical racial belief in An American Dilemma in order to support his theory that beliefs are opportunistic, and that in America the beliefs the white man holds concerning the Negro are part of tradition and faulty rationalization, rather than objective truth based on objective knowledge. One of the ideas that preceded the American Revolution was based on a misinterpretation of the Bible, that is, that the Negro was a descendant of Noah's son, Ham, and was doomed by God Himself to be a servant forever on account of an ancient sin.²⁷

²⁶Ibid., p. 68.

²⁷Ibid., p. 85.

In the minds of enlightened slaveholders who played an important role in the Revolution, slavery was wrong. In the North, where slavery was unprofitable, slavery was abolished in state after state during the Revolutionary era. However, in the South where the plantation economy rested on slavery, slaves represented a tremendous investment. During the three decades prior to the Civil War, an elaborate ideology, which was contrary to the democratic creed, developed in the South in defense of slavery.

The central theme in the southern theory was the moral and political dictum that slavery did not violate the "higher law," that it was condoned by the Bible and by the "laws of nature," and the "free" society in contrast was a violation of those laws.²⁸

In his discussion of race, Myrdal distinguished between the racial ideas commonly held by white people and the scientific concept of race. He held that the definition of the Negro as held by whites was a "social and conventional one," and not a biological one. The scientific concept of race testified to the "fundamental unity and similarity of mankind above minor individual and group differentials."²⁸ Myrdal believes, as the scientist does, that man, the homo sapiens, evolved only once and that average differences that exist now between men are due to differences in environment.

²⁸Ibid., p. 186.

²⁹Ibid., p. 115.

Again Myrdal places his faith in the rationality of man, and is certain that "under the exposure of science and education that the white people in America might in the future gradually rectify their opportunistic beliefs and even change their valuation to conform with the Creed."³⁰ Here again we see the necessity for educating the white man.

As a strategic justification of what Myrdal calls the "color caste," the belief was held that the Negro is innately inferior in mental capacities and moral traits. Drawing upon the massive amounts of research done on the psychic traits of the American Negro, Myrdal contends that these investigations, in spite of what so many were eager to prove, failed to demonstrate the innate inferiority of the Negro. Myrdal claimed that the desire to "attain methodologically valid results in measurement tended in the long-run to overcome presumptions and biases."³¹ Myrdal did not deny that measurable differences existed between the Negro and white. He concluded, however, that though the observations were correct, the white man erred in inferring that observed differences were innate and part of "nature." Regarding the white researcher, Myrdal stated:

He has not been able to discern the influence of gross environmental differences. He has also made

³⁰Ibid., p. 117.

³¹Ibid., p. 145.

many observational errors, because his observations have been limited and biased.³²

These false racial beliefs, based on so-called scientific concepts, failed to permeate the higher valuations of most Americans. Myrdal held that the following norms were generally explicitly held on the higher or national plane of the valuation sphere of the ordinary Americans:

1. There is nothing wrong with economic inequality by itself.
2. That no American population groups shall be allowed to fall under a certain minimum level of living . . .
3. That Negroes shall be awarded equal opportunities. Insofar as Negro poverty is caused by discrimination, the American Creed is challenged in one of its most specific and longest established precepts.³³

Once again, Myrdal confronted the split in American personality and the ambivalence in American social morals. This was especially true in terms of the third value premise demanding fairplay and equal opportunity for the Negro. The formalized educational institutions in America have had to come to grips with the third premise.

Of particular interest to the educator is Myrdal's thesis that the whole white southern culture, generation after generation, has labored to convince itself that there is "no conflict between the equalitarianism in the Creed and

³²Ibid., p. 144.

³³Ibid., p. 214.

discrimination against Negroes."³⁴ He attributed the economic backwardness of the South to the rigid institutional structure of the economic life of the region, which is historically derived from slavery. One would have to add the educational institutions which have contributed to the economic backwardness of the region.

Valuations and Beliefs and the Modernization Ideals

Another aspect of valuations and beliefs pertain to South Asia. As was stated earlier, value conflicts are found in all cultures. Every study of a social problem is and must be approached by valuations. Myrdal contends that throughout the history of social science, the hiding of valuations has concealed the inquirer's wish to avoid facing real issues. He believes that the only way one can strive for objectivity in theoretical analysis is to state valuations and that such statements should be the premises for all policy conclusions. Myrdal adopted the Modernization Ideals³⁵ as a value premise for his study of South Asia. The Modernization Ideals became the "official creed" of South Asia. They are the declared goals in the development plans of the area. They include planning for development, increasing productivity and levels of living, promoting social and economic egalitarianism, and national independence. These ideals were in effect in South Asia at least to the extent of preventing these countries from

³⁴Ibid., p. 216.

³⁵See Appendix II.

reverting to their traditional undisturbed status.³⁶

In Asian Drama Myrdal reminds us that in every country, to some extent, the government is dependent on acceptance of its policies by the people. The Modernization Ideals are all, in a sense, alien to the region, since they stem from foreign influences. They have come to be indigenous in the sense that they have been adopted and shaped by the intellectual elite, who in turn have endeavored to diffuse them throughout the population. The other valuations held by the mass of people and, in large part, also by the intellectual elite, are mainly "traditional." They are part of an inherited culture long identified with a stagnating society.³⁷

Myrdal found many specific traditional valuations in South Asia that are widely held and articulated systematically enough to be easily observable. Since they are specific, they cannot remain inflexible, indifferent, or ambivalent as can the Modernization Ideals. In fact, they often conflict with these ideals and are impediments to planning and development. For example, Article Forty-eight of the Indian Constitution made the states responsible for agricultural policy which sought both to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on scientific lines and to prohibit the slaughter of milk and

³⁶Myrdal, Asian Drama, pp. 35-36.

³⁷Ibid., p. 68.

draft cattle. The simple fact is, of course, that it is impossible to plan a rational policy for husbandry in India if cattle cannot be selectively killed to the extent and at the age that is most advantageous economically. In asking for both rational husbandry and a ban on cow slaughter, the Directive Principle was self-contradictory--a value conflict.³⁸

Myrdal found that there are many stereotypes that are held as traditional value premises regarding India. For instance, the charity and tolerance often attributed to the Indians directly contradicts the extreme intolerance bred by rigid social stratification. Against the claim that people in India are, in general, peculiarly spiritual and non-materialistic must be placed the common observation of Myrdal of a propensity for narrow materialism in all social strata. The great respect for learning in India, regularly referred to by Nehru, tallies poorly with the low social and economic status accorded the village teacher, and increasingly, the college professor. Asceticism and the renunciation of material pleasures often idealized as the "simple peasant life," is a typical example of making virtue out of necessity in very poor countries.³⁹

Implicit in Myrdal's institutional approach in Asian Drama were his observations about religion, "Religion should

³⁸Ibid., p. 134.

³⁹Ibid., p. 98.

be studied for what it really is in India, a ritualized and stratified complex of highly emotional beliefs and valuations that give the sanction of sacredness, taboo, and immutability to inherited institutional arrangements, modes of living and attitudes." Viewed in this realistic and comprehensive sense then, institutional religion usually acts as a tremendous force for social inertia. By characterizing popular religion as a force of inertia and irrationality that sanctifies the whole system of life and work, attitudes and institutions, Myrdal in effect stressed an important aspect of underdevelopment, the resistance of that system (religion) to planned, induced changes along the lines of the Modernization Ideals.⁴⁰

Myrdal makes note, however, of the fact that not all elements and valuations of that system are necessarily irrational from the point of view of the Modernization Ideals. For example, the ritual washing of the body observed by some castes in India can certainly be a health-protecting custom. It can also be a basis for attempting to educate people to more hygienic habits. Likewise, the vegetarian diet has a justification in terms of planning in a country as poor as India where climate makes the preservation of animal food so difficult and where vegetable crops can be grown that are high in protein and vitamins, and cheaper than animal food.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 103-109.

In essence, then, Myrdal was saying that an old custom is often based on utilitarian considerations that justify it from a modernization point of view.⁴¹

As Myrdal observed Indian political life, he realized there had developed a combination of radicalism in principle and conservatism in practice that was evident in Congress even before independence. Social legislation pointed the direction in which society should travel, but let nature take its own course on the road along the way. In banning dowries, child marriages, and untouchability, the government did not vigorously seek to enforce its legislation. The dichotomy between ideals and reality, and even between enacted legislation and implementation is woven into the fabric of Indian politics. There is an unwillingness among the rulers to impose obligations on the government and a corresponding unwillingness on their part to obey the rules laid down by democratic procedures.

The persistence of the caste structure in Indian society provides a striking example of the divergence of precept and practice. It is the opinion of Myrdal and others that the caste system is probably stronger today than it was when India became independent. Discrimination because of caste was outlawed in the Constitution and a bill unanimously

⁴¹Ibid., p. 1576.

adopted by Parliament in 1955 made the practice of untouchability a criminal offense. Caste, however, is so deeply entrenched in India's traditions that it cannot be eradicated except by drastic surgery, and for this there has been no serious political pressure. Myrdal observed that the political and intellectual leaders of the Congress, though continuing to publicly condemn "casteism" together with "communalism," "provincialism," and "lingualism," and all the other forces that fragment national life, do so in an unconvincing manner and they suggest no specific practical measures for their abolishment.⁴²

Myrdal adopted the Modernization Ideals as the value-premises for Asian Drama. He found that these ideals were mainly the ideology of the politically alert, articulate, and active part of the population, particularly the intellectual elite. The Modernization Ideals had to conflict and compete with conflicting valuations. The Modernization Ideals were all, in a sense, alien to the region, since they stemmed from foreign influences. They had become indigenous in the sense that they had been adopted and shaped by the intellectual elite, who in turn, had endeavored to diffuse them throughout the population. The other valuations held by the mass of people and in large part also by the intellectual elite are

⁴²Ibid., p. 229.

mainly "traditional." They are part of an inherited culture long identified with a stagnating society.⁴³

Myrdal explained that the intellectual elite's attachment to their nation's history, religion, and culture provides more than mere pleasure. It is a psychological necessity, the more so because of the long subjugation of these peoples and the shocked awareness of economic and social backwardness following acceptance of the Modernization Ideals. In India, for example, there is a rich mythology about the ancient village as a perfect democracy with a rational cooperative organization of production and community life, where caste observance was less rigid and degrading, and women enjoyed a higher status. "Virtually any cause can find sanction in history, and opposing valuations can be supported by a different interpretation of the facts (or assumptions), about the glory and superiority of the past."⁴⁴

Conclusion

Values are so inextricably woven into our language, thought, and behavior patterns that they have fascinated philosophers for millennia. Nearly seventy years ago Weber referred to the term "value" as "that unfortunate child of

⁴³Ibid., p. 137

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 153.

misery of our science." For Myrdal, this is not a fair description of the place to be occupied by the concept of value in the social sciences. In his two major research projects, Myrdal adopted value premises, related them to beliefs, and elucidated some of the ways that they interacted on each other and functioned opportunistically.

There were two interesting points that emerged from his sociological analysis of attitudes, values, and beliefs. First, the emergence of a large body of "myths" of varying degrees of falsity, which served as rationalizations and justifications for the prevailing social attitude and its results. Secondly, the frequency with which one and the same individual or group can manage to materially contradict arguments on the subject. Myrdal calls these myths "beliefs with a purpose," the purpose being in most cases a hidden and unconscious one.

In exposing stereotypes, Myrdal makes us conscious that one of the great tragedies of the Negro problem is that Americans until recently had not taken the trouble to understand it. We unknowingly mixed fact and prejudice. We refused to admit that the inferiority of the Negro was largely made on earth and not in heaven. In the South, in order for the white man to keep the Negro in what has been regarded as his place, the white man had to forego high standards in labor and education, and had to accept a political one-party

system in which the voter was not given a choice of issues, only of personalities.

If there is one conclusion which both An American Dilemma and Asian Drama make evident, it is that education is Myrdal's solution for many problems. Myrdal proposed as the first step to solution of the Negro problem, widespread education of the white man as to the capacities of the Negro, the handicaps to which we subject him, and the limitations of our thinking. Myrdal believed that education would reveal the facts of Negro exploitation, by forcing to light the contradiction between Negro treatment and American ideals, and thereby mitigate racial intolerance. It is here that Myrdal expresses a faith in education not widely shared by social scientists. Myrdal's educational views will be discussed in chapter six. Myrdal succinctly summed up his theory about beliefs and education in an article in Phylon magazine:

Most beliefs are wrong and this should be demonstrated. The beliefs have a purpose, and people cling to their queer misconceptions about reality with intensive tenacity. But people are also rational and want to know the truth. If against their emotional resistance, people's wrong ideas are corrected, this has an influence also upon their valuations. One way of fighting prejudices is undoubtedly to educate people intellectually.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Gunnar Myrdal, "Social Trends in America and Strategic Approaches to the Negro Problem," Phylon, IX, No. 3 (1948), p. 212.

CHAPTER IV

PLANNING AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Introduction

Unlike Marx, Weber and the other fathers of sociology, Gunnar Myrdal was not preoccupied with the general trend of history and its meaning but rather sought the responses to the challenges of his times in economic study and social science research. * The social sciences are for him the way to approach the complexities of the myriad problems encountered by modern man in the underdeveloped nations, as well as in the western world. Myrdal believes that the intellectual tools forged by economists and utilized in the social sciences will provide insight into current social dislocations. They will also aid men and nations in rational planning towards a better world.

Myrdal's predilection for planning is as much a result of his rationalizations as his social conditioning. In his hands planning becomes the rationale for social reform through government and educational means. Planning is a necessary but not a sufficient component of Myrdal's theory of social change. Thinking of economic and social life in "terms of ends and means" he rejected the "laissez-faire

inherent in the philosophy of natural law," and arrived at the "necessity for some kind of economic planning."¹

Unplanned change, through invention and cultural borrowing, has taken place since the inception of man's cultures. The world is now involved in a relatively new process--deliberately planned change. In some quarters, social and economic planning has become an honored and sanctioned endeavor. However, for many cynics and conservatives, planning looms on the horizon as a modern substitute for the prayers and incantations by which medieval peoples endeavored to control the world about them. Early in his career, Myrdal accepted the premise that planning was a necessity and arrived at the conclusion that society was our least efficient machine, due in no small measure to the lack of a "rational and planned social organization of production and distribution."²

Planning

In discussing the genesis of planning, Galbraith pointed out that prior to the end of World War II, the term implied a "sensible concern for what might happen in the future and a disposition by forehanded action to forestall avoidable

¹Myrdal, Value in Social Theory, p. 207.

²Myrdal, Population, A Problem for Democracy, p. 136.

disfunction or misfortune." It was not until the Cold War that the word "planning" acquired ideological overtones. The Communist countries not only socialized property but in the process, they planned. As a result, planning was equated with the loss of liberty, and consequently was something that a free society should avoid.³

The trend towards planning, as Myrdal analyzed it, does not endanger democracy but instead gives it a wider scope and deeper roots. Reviewing the historical record, Myrdal found no evidence of a democracy failing because of too much planning. Planning did not, of course, destroy democracy in Russia, as there was none to begin with. True, there were the beginnings of democracy in the German Weimer Republic, but when it collapsed in the early thirties, it was certainly not due to excessive planning. In the western countries, the trend towards planning poses no danger for democracy; for Myrdal there is more truth in the converse proposition. "Democracy, which is itself amongst the forces driving forward the trend towards planning can, in certain of its manifestations, endanger, or at least postpone, the fullest rationality of planning."⁴ Myrdal's conception of

³John Kenneth Galbraith, The New Industrial State (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), p. 4.

⁴Gunnar Myrdal, Beyond the Welfare State: Economic Planning and Its International Implications (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), pp. 88-92. (Originally published in the series of Storrs Lectures in Jurisprudence, Yale Law School, 1958).

planning was eloquently expressed in an address made before the American Institute of Planners:

What we mean by planning, however--and what all those in America who are allergic to planning also mean-- is a determined effort, through our democratic institutions for collective decisions, to make very much more intensive, comprehensive, and long-range forecasts of future trends than have been customary, and thereafter to formulate and execute a system of coordinated policies framed to have the effect of bending the foreseen trends toward realizing our ideals, spelled out in advance as definite goals for planning.⁵

Myrdal's basic assumption in regard to planning is that as a prelude to planning there must be authority to enforce these plans. Planning for Myrdal in the economic and social realm, must of necessity include setting of goals and a course of action and the authority to carry out those plans. The fallaciousness of attempting to reform any institution without this authority to enforce reform is obvious. For instance, a really complete system of planning then in education, there must be a system of evaluation. In the economic sphere there are specific characteristics that can be measured and stated in terms of "input" and "output." In education this presents problems even in western countries, but it is a factor that can be overlooked no longer.

It must be emphasized that Myrdal's philosophy is not

⁵Gunnar Myrdal, "The Necessity and Difficulty of Planning the Future Society" (Address at the National Consultation on the Future Environment of a Democracy: the Next Fifty Years, called by the American Institute of Planners, Washington, D. C., October 3, 1967), p. 2. (Mimeographed).

opposed to the democratic system and ideals. While he has always favored government intervention when necessary, he recognizes the fundamental need for individual effort. The purpose of planning, as Myrdal sees it, is to put up the framework and then let individual enterprise take over. In Myrdal's way of thinking, the government should always anticipate the needs of the people in the future. Because planning is done best and cheapest by government, it should be a governmental function. In contrast to the laissez-faire critics of planning, Myrdal believes that increased government planning and regulation will result in greater individual freedom.⁶

Democratic planning is popular in India where it embraces many ideals. Myrdal noted in Asian Drama that the term is seldom, if ever, used in the restricted sense common to most westerners who imply merely that planned public policies and their coordination should emerge from a democratic political process and be executed by a popularly elected parliamentary government. In India, it is generally thought that democratic planning should create greater equality in the interest of the masses and should be carried out without resort to compulsion. Not only does Myrdal disagree with this but he blames lack of enforcement ability on the

⁶Firing Line, P.B.S. telecast, November 23, 1969.

failure to plan for it.⁷

Myrdal does not share Gandhi's faith in the Indian villages. Gandhi's view, which is shared by many in India today, is that democracy should be built from below. Gandhi believed that Indian villages, despite their inequalities, social rigidities and other signs of stagnation, could still draw upon a tradition so vital as to ensure the possibility of its revival. Myrdal does not believe that voluntary participation will emerge spontaneously from the stagnant Indian villages. It needs to be fostered and directed by government planning. His suggestion would be to integrate villages into bigger units at the very onset of planning.

Myrdal sees little hope for rapid development in India without greater social discipline. In principle, discipline can be effected within the framework of whatever degree of political democracy a country can achieve. "In the end, nothing is more dangerous for democracy than lack of discipline."⁸ A low level of social discipline is one of the most fundamental differences between the South Asian countries today and western countries at the beginning of the industrialization. Social discipline is a prerequisite of planning

⁷Myrdal, Asian Drama, pp. 850-899.

⁸Ibid., p. 895.

which is endemic to development.

Myrdal does not fear the threat of Communism in India because he feels that Communism does not necessarily follow poverty but rather follows political involvement and power politics. Furthermore, concern about socialism in India in the wake of state planning is not well founded because in India socialism is usually discussed in terms of public interest and private benefit. Indian socialism is an ideology propagated by an intellectual elite, who are convinced that socialism is desirable on rational grounds as a means for development and for achieving greater equality. The socialistic doctrine of public ownership and management is not applied, and is not meant to apply either, in agriculture or in small-scale industry and crafts. In weighing the reasons for and against public participation in the industrialization of India, Myrdal stressed that the interests of private business do not normally conflict with expansion of the public sector of big industry. Central among the reasons given for the planned enlargement of the public sector within big industry in India is the quest for equality, that is the desire to prevent a concentration of economic power in the hands of a few. Myrdal suggests that as long as private enterprise has not the ability to enter the industrial field on a large scale, India might well find it advisable to plan

and preserve a public sector of heavy industry.⁹

Myrdal is concerned with state planning--which in modern usage implies the dynamic idea of being undertaken in order to engender "development." The specific goals for development are in final analysis determined by the political process in the state. The government undertakes planning for realization of these goals. As Myrdal states:

Planning consists in a conscious and organized attempt by the government to spell out those goals in realistically attainable "targets," related to a future point of time, and to initiate and co-ordinate public policies for the purpose of causing such changes in the national community that the targets are achieved.¹⁰

Though Myrdal considers planning a precondition of industrialization, development will have to be initiated by state policies. Economic planning in the western countries was a result of industrialization, whereas planning in India is employed to foster development. The acceptance of the ideology of government planning for development as a concern of the state is an important factor differentiating India's situation from that of the western countries when they stood on the threshold of industrialization.¹¹ Planning is such a

⁹Ibid., pp. 775-781.

¹⁰Gunnar Myrdal, "The Theoretical Assumptions of Social Planning," International Transactions of the 4th World Congress of Sociology, LIX (London: International Sociology Association, 1966), p. 155.

¹¹Myrdal, Asian Drama, p. 798.

necessary adjunct to development that it was included in the Modernization Ideals which served as a value premise for Myrdal's Asian study.

Industrialization is unquestionably of crucial importance for long-range development in India, but the more immediate problem is agriculture. Agriculture will have to absorb most of the increase in the labor force for decades to come. Modern technology in western agriculture has been directed toward raising yields while the labor force has been declining. These developments do not fit the situation in India. Another reason why the adoption of modern agricultural technology from advanced countries is not very practical for India is that it is based on research of a kind of agriculture that operates under climatic and soil conditions different from those in India. Naturally, for Myrdal, the answer lies in planning to engender by state intervention development in spite of all the mentioned difficulties.

One of the basic assumptions underlying Myrdal's research in Asian Drama was that causation is circular,¹² and in this way planning for him became the intellectual matrix of the entire modernization ideology. Of all the countries of South Asia, he felt the argument for state planning for economic development was an element of the "new nationalism"

¹²In Myrdal's schema, circular causation is a cumulative sequence of interrelated actions occurring somewhat in the manner of a social chain reaction.

in India. In part, this ideology for planning expressed a protest against colonial "laissez faire." It is Myrdal's opinion that India has gone further toward consolidation of effective government than any other country in the region. It is true, as one observer puts it, that in "India the Plan is the focal point of public life, a tenet of national faith."¹³

The almost total absence of planning is, of course, particularly flagrant in regard to international relations. In the context of planning, one can skip all the important material issues in regard to the War in Vietnam and stress only one--planning, or rather the lack of it. According to Myrdal's analysis, this war has developed in a completely unplanned way: "as a destiny in the sense of the classic drama." As Myrdal views the record, he is positive that no one sharing the responsibility for the individual decisions during the almost twenty years that have led up to the present situation had any intention, or even any idea, that developments would take the turn they did. No one planned or envisioned the dire results of United States' involvement in Vietnam. The problem of why a country's policy is so unplanned, so irrational in its means, and so irresponsible toward declared ideals and goals presents a fertile field of research. While

¹³Myrdal, Asian Drama, p. 73.

acknowledging that part of the problem can be laid at the feet of government structures, Myrdal, in the final analysis, senses that the crux of the problem lies in the ignorance of the general public who is lulled by nationalistic pressure groups. From this, Myrdal deduces that any improvement in planning should be based on a massive adult education drive, directed towards increasing popular knowledge and strengthening popular faith in our goals and ideals.¹⁴

For Myrdal, America's current bewildering indecision to direct remedial action to improve social and economic conditions is incomprehensible. Measures need to be taken to alleviate the circumstances implicit in the protest of the Negroes and other minority groups. There is disagreement as to the extent that police power should be used to suppress protests, and to the extent remedial action be taken to improve the social and economic conditions that are at the root of the protest. This state of mind is devastating for rational planning. It also reflects ambivalence among the people with regard to the ideals and goals which Myrdal assumes are the fundamental value premises for planning. No rational planning possible if these value premises are not clear.¹⁵

Assuming, as Myrdal does, that social and economic

¹⁴Myrdal, "The Necessity and Difficulty of Planning the Future Society," pp. 2-6.

¹⁵Myrdal, "The Theoretical Assumptions of Social Planning," pp. 5-6.

malfunctions are at the root of racial unrest in the United States, then these conditions should be improved. Myrdal insists that policy planning measures for the improvement of existing socio-economic conditions cannot be restricted to any one minority group. At the same time, he is well aware that chronic poverty has had debilitating consequences for many Negroes. Poverty-stricken Negroes represent about one-third of all the desperately poor in the United States. The improvement of Negro housing, schooling, and other conditions of life can only be done as part of a general policy that is directed to the eradication of the root causes of poverty in the United States. Following the general criteria of his method of planning, Myrdal would introduce policies and planning that are general and comprehensive in scope.¹⁶

The proper role of government, according to Myrdal's philosophy, is to keep business growing and stable, keep employment up, and provide for social justice and mobility for the worker. A prerequisite necessary to achieve this goal is planning. Myrdal is not optimistic that America will undertake any of this long-range planning due to the near-sightedness of politicians, officials, and experts in Washington. He finds that little work is done in the realm of economic planning as a whole in America, and suggests that a new philosophy of economics is necessary, which must be

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 7-8.

fostered through education.¹⁷ This will be discussed in more detail in chapter six.

Galbraith agrees with Myrdal that the denial that we do any planning has concealed the fact of such control even from those who are controlled. Like Myrdal, he regretted that the reaction against world planning occurred at a time when the increased use of technology and the accompaniment of time and capital were forcing extensive planning on all industrial communities. Galbraith notes with pleasure that in many quarters the word "planning" is again acquiring a measure of respectability.¹⁸

Not all economists succumb to an aura of planning. Friedman, who relates planning to government control, is antagonistic to it. He is alarmed by those who become impatient with the slowness of persuasion and example to achieve the great social changes they envision, and fears they would produce a collective state. Lord Acton's warning that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," still has validity for Friedman. He reminds us that concentrated power is not rendered harmless by the good

¹⁷Gunnar Myrdal, "The Role of Government in the Economy" (Address at the Anniversary of the Fund for the Republic. Tape from the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, New York: January 16, 1963).

¹⁸Galbraith, The New Industrial State, p. 22.

intentions of those who create it.¹⁹

The concept of planning poses some fundamental philosophical questions. Is not an ideally planned society a prison? Does not the continual development of social engineering lead to the complete enslavement of the individual? Myrdal would respond to both these questions in the negative. Within his conceptual framework, planning would operate most effectively in a democracy.

The basic conviction of Myrdal that society has to be planned and that people have to be free parallels Mannheim's thinking regarding planning. However, their approach would be via different avenues. Mannheim's planning and freedom would result from the leadership of the intellectual elite, whereas Myrdal's planning would emanate from a participating democracy. Mannheim did not imply that social planning necessarily involved total social control. However, his planning for freedom rests with the leadership of the elite, whereas Myrdal's leadership function has a broad base in democratic institutions.²⁰

Social Change

Myrdal, engaged in a lifelong dialogue with the ghosts

¹⁹Milton Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 20-22.

²⁰Karl Mannheim, Freedom, Power and Democratic Planning (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 11-13.

of the Enlightenment, is dedicated to its principles of egalitarianism. These egalitarian principles coupled with Myrdal's axiology provide a synthesis for the development of his theory of social change. A key to the understanding of Myrdal's theory of social change lies in his cyclical interpretation of social development. He contends that there will always occur periods of crises and that these "crises will precipitate a change in thinking."²¹ Paradoxically, Myrdal's social theory approximates the linear-development approach for he sees social regeneration as a process of constantly increasing rationalization. Thus Myrdal's approach to change is two-edged; like Weber "he combines a cyclical theory of social development with a linear theory of cultural development."²²

Myrdal, as an institutional economist, holds that social change may originate in any institutional area, bringing about changes in other areas, which in turn make for further adaptations in the initial sphere of change. All the varied factors endemic to society are viewed as potentially independent variables which influence each other as well as the course of society. There is also something of the social evolutionist

²¹Gunnar Myrdal, "Crises and Cycles in the Development of Economics" (response at a luncheon for him and Alva Myrdal given by the American Economic Association at its meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, December 28, 1971), p. 1. (Mimeograph), p. 1.

²²Amitai Etzioni and Eva A. Etzioni, Social Change: Sources, Patterns, and Consequences (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964), p. 5.

in Myrdal, in that the idea of progress persists in his social theory. However, he recognizes that change is not necessarily conducive to better functioning. This, of course, is borne out by the historical record and a great deal of contemporary evidence.

The concept of social change is, among other things, a perspective of analysis. It can provide us with a framework within which to put relevant components in a study of society. There are three perspectives from which we can view social change; the cultural, social, and historical. The cultural perspective describes the values at the core of a change; a change in the structure of society must involve a change in the value system that supports it. The social perspective describes the process of change and is concerned with events insofar as these events represent the process. The historical perspective depicts events, their meanings, and the relationship between these events. The historical perspective is interested in actual events as these reveal the past, the cultural, in the kinds of value change that occur, and the social, in the structure of events and how they were produced.²³

A change in society comes, even as does a tumor in an organism, as a foreign and unwanted agent, not necessarily

²³Carl Weinberg, Education and Social Problems (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp. 35-38.

of destruction, but always a disturbance to the established and organizationally preferred structures and processes of life. Sometimes resistance to change is clearly based upon the protection of vested interests. Change is painful but fortunately human beings are possessed of a certain amount of curiosity and this human characteristic sometimes has consequences that conflict with that other human tendency-- resistance to change. Every innovation is at once a utilization of established cultural elements and a violation of some aspect of the social status quo. Through most of recorded social history, men have apparently considered that change per se is undesirable and that the ideal social condition is stability.

Myrdal's discussion of social change in both An American Dilemma and Asian Drama deals with the conditions under which social changes are initiated, spread from the initial sector or sectors to others. The principle of cumulation--a conception of equilibrium and change--was posited by Myrdal as an explanatory "chain-reaction" type of principle in American race relations.²⁴ Myrdal's principle of cumulation or the theory of the vicious circle is an effort to escape the popular and long-held concepts of static equilibrium, involved in such dualities as adjustment-maladjustment, stability-instability, and normal-abnormal.

²⁴Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 1065.

In Rich Lands and Poor²⁵ it was suggested that the "principle of interlocking, circular interdependence within a process of cumulative causation," had validity over the entire field of social relations. In his theory of social change, Myrdal has employed the concepts of circular and cumulative causation. These are outlined as follows:

1. First step: Circular causation consisting of multiple factors interacting with each other in such a way as to create the initial push for change that would come from one or more of these factors. This occurs as a type of chain-reaction.
2. Second step: Principle of cumulation would become operative as a result of step one. The initial push--better education for the Negro to reduce prejudices, which in turn would operate as a principle of cumulation and interact with other variables and decrease white prejudices.

The principle of cumulation presupposes first of all multiple causation, stated in terms of given variables. These variables are social, economic, physical, and ideological. They would include social relations, beliefs and valuations, job opportunities, and housing patterns. Myrdal states:

²⁵Myrdal, Rich Lands and Poor, pp. 12-14. See also Myrdal, "The Theoretical Assumptions of Social Planning," p. 165. Supra, p. 44.

Poverty itself breeds the conditions which perpetuate poverty. The vicious circle operates of course also in the case of whites. But in the case of Negroes the deprecation is fortified by the elaborate system of racial beliefs and the discriminations are organized in the social institutions of rigid caste and not of flexible class.²⁶

Secondly, the principle of cumulation does not assume any "primary cause" but rather a scheme, system or configuration of interdependent factors wherein "everything is of cause to everything else."²⁷ The low level of Negro education resulted in unsatisfactory employment with low levels of earnings which, in turn, only provided for lowered standards of living. The principle of cumulation can operate in two directions. A rise in employment will tend to increase earnings, raise standards of living, and improve health and education. Myrdal spurns as a theoretical panacea the idea that there is one predominant factor, a basic factor in social change. As he looks upon the problem of dynamic social causation, this approach is too narrow. The economic conditions under which the Negro lives are important, but they are also closely interrelated to all other conditions of Negro life.²⁸

Thirdly, Myrdal's principle of cumulation suggests

²⁶Ibid., p. 209.

²⁷Ibid., p. 78.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 76-79.

that any change in any aspect of the Negro's plane of living will have cumulative effects beyond its own significance.

Thus, an increase in the Negro's education will enable him to secure employment at a level significantly higher than the corresponding increase in education. In Myrdal's words, any change in any one of these interrelated factors will,

by the aggregate weight of the cumulative effects running back and forth between them all, start the whole system moving in one direction or the other as the case may be, with a speed depending upon the original push and the functions of causal interrelation within the system.²⁹

When Myrdal suggested that any change in any aspect of the Negro's plane of living will have cumulative effect beyond its own significance, he was posing a general sociological principle of change and not one limited to race relations.

One of the basic assumptions in Myrdal's study of race relations in America was the necessity and desirability of reducing the bias in white people's racial beliefs concerning Negroes. Myrdal's logical conclusion was to improve the Negro status, behavior, and characteristics, and thereby reduce white bias. "The impediment of the strategy was, of course, that white beliefs, directly and indirectly, were active forces in keeping the Negroes low--the vicious circle."³⁰

The effects of indirect and direct discrimination on the Negro's health fits into Myrdal's pattern of the vicious

²⁹Ibid., p. 1067.

³⁰Ibid., p. 109.

circle:

Inadequate education for Negroes . . . in the South not only prevents the training of Negro medical experts, but also keeps knowledge about sanitation and health down . . . ill health reduces the chance of economic advancement, which, in turn, operates to reduce the chances of getting adequate medical facilities or the knowledge necessary for personal health care.³¹

Due to a lack of education, it was difficult to instruct the Negroes in the practice of birth control. The Negroes did not see the advantage of birth control because, on the whole, they had all the prejudices against it that other "poor, ignorant, superstitious people have." Myrdal saw the need for a massive campaign to promote birth control among the Negroes and it was his opinion that the "use of Negro doctors and nurses was essential."³² The use of Negroes to work with Negroes is essential.

The perennial question asked in regard to the Negro is why is he always so poor? For Myrdal, of course, the answer is found in the cultural and institutional traditions that white people exploit Negroes. The fact that these traditions were rooted and justified by the false racial beliefs is certainly no credit to the educational institutions of the South. Myrdal deems the scheme of causal interrelation important in explaining why Negroes were so poor:

³¹Ibid., p. 172.

³²Ibid., p. 180.

A primary change, induced or unplanned, affecting any one of three bundles of interdependent causative factors--(1) the economic level; (2) standards of intelligence, ambition, health, education . . . ; and (3) discrimination by whites--will bring changes in the other two and through mutual interaction, move the whole system along in one direction or the other.³³

While Myrdal maintains that no single factor is the "final cause," certain factors are "strategic," in the sense that they can be controlled. This might give us a clue as to the apparent failure of desegregation of schools. National planning was attempted but the factors selected to bring about a change could not be controlled. If we look at the American Creed, we find that ideologically, in the economic sphere, it is less specified and articulate than in the field of civil rights. As a result of this, equality of opportunity has been battling with "liberty to run one's business as one pleases." Certainly this has influenced educational institutions, with the American public insisting on local control.

According to Myrdal in An American Dilemma, the original "push" in White-Negro relations was the slave-master, then the caste system, buttressed by discrimination, race prejudice, and social myth of inherent Negro inferiority. While perhaps this is a fairly accurate statement, there are two features of Myrdal's analysis which seem to need some qualification. One is the implicit idea that one variable in a complex of variables is as important as another. Thus, Myrdal

³³Ibid., p. 205.

is highly critical of the overemphasis in many quarters on the economic disadvantages accorded the Negro. He is apparently convinced that ideas and ideals have equal if not greater weight. Also, some variables or factors appear to be more significant than others in the total cumulations.

The second qualification which may be made of Myrdal's principle of cumulation as discussed in An American Dilemma is the repeated and emphasized stress placed on the white man not only for giving the original "push" to segregation, the caste system, and discrimination, but also for the whole tone of blaming the whites for nearly all the Negroes' ills and hardships. This does not seem to be entirely warranted by the facts. Obviously, aggression, like love and sympathy, is a matter of interaction. While the form and meaning of the interaction may well be set by a dominant group as against a dependent or weak group, nevertheless, the latter cannot escape some moral responsibility for developing its own interactional patterns. One can scarcely explain all Negro aggression purely in terms of response to white discrimination and prejudice. One cannot ignore the facts, which Myrdal illustrates, that Negroes do exploit each other.

Myrdal continually implies that white domination is the only cause of the Negro's troubles. In his theoretical discussion, however, he emphasizes multiple causation and the fact that there is no "primary" cause. The theory of cumulation may have contributed to over-optimistic

expectations in regard to the simplicity with which racial prejudice might be broken down. However, as a theoretical statement it served to reawaken social scientists to the sociological roots of prejudice. As a principle of social change, "cumulation contributed to and has become assimilated into, the body of modern functional sociology."³⁴

The process of social change, which is to some extent the historical process, in the past has been largely controlled by ruling elite. We have now arrived at a point in time where large numbers of peoples, having solved to an extent their problems of securing the basic needs, are now thinking about the next step which involves participation in shaping their lives and their society. However, due to the rigidity of our social institutions, most of us feel as if we are the subjects of social change rather than its masters. The institutions of a people and the character of its members act and react on each other. A change in the character of the members will tend to be reflected in a change in the institutions; conversely, changes in institutions will sooner or later affect the character of the members. Changes in the character of individuals can only affect institutions insofar as they are expressed in action.

Obviously, the implications of technological advance,

³⁴Bryce F. Ryan, Social and Cultural Change (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1969), p. 246.

agricultural reorganization, industrialization, and urbanization differ from society to society, as do the resulting structural patterns in society. This was evident in the approach to social change taken by Myrdal in India. As he surveyed the situation, he found the main resistance to change stemming from attitudes and institutions that were part of an inherited culture. Since this type of society tends to operate constantly and consistently toward self-maintenance, Myrdal applied his design for social change to existing institutions.

Cottage industry, which is still very strong in India, is small in scale and frequently confined to a single unit and is characterized by production of traditional commodities using traditional (non-power drive) equipment and techniques. Members of the household rather than hired labor are employed, and the production has a strong rural orientation. Small-scale industry is increasingly characterized by the production of non-traditional commodities sometimes using modern techniques. Some of these industries are in direct competition with cottage industry. Almost seventy per cent of the workers surveyed by Myrdal (figures for 1960) reported employment in cottage industry, whereas relatively few reported employment in the intermediate sizes of enterprise.

For Myrdal the consequences of this situation were not difficult to assess. Not only does it keep down the overall level of industrial productivity, but it tends to perpetuate

the low living levels of rural areas. The familiar patterns of cumulative causation appear once more; output per man in cottage industry is limited to the constricted village market, which in turn is limited by low agriculture and to a lesser extent, industrial productivity. However, Myrdal does not advocate attacking cottage industry in order to break out of the trap of low-level productivity on the village level. He states that "a rapid destruction of cottage industry would not only eliminate a source of supplementary rural income, but would also accentuate the push toward urbanization and further aggravate congestion in the urban areas."³⁵

It is a major goal of planning for development in India to raise the abysmally low levels of living for the mass of the people. By the circular causation attending changes in social conditions, a rise in levels of living is likely to improve almost all other conditions, in particular labor input and efficiency, productivity, and also attitudes and institutions. Myrdal maintains that it is an important fact that a rise in levels of living has a much greater instrumental value in India than in the advanced countries. In the latter, levels of living are already so high that on the margin the productivity effect of a change is nil or slight.

³⁵Myrdal, Asian Drama, pp. 524-527.

From his study in South Asia, Myrdal became more and more convinced of the realism of the hypothesis that "often it is not more difficult but easier to cause a big change rapidly than a small change gradually."³⁶ The bigger and more rapid change ordinarily must be attained by resolutely altering the institutions within which people live and work, instead of trying, by direct or indirect means to induce changes in attitudes, while leaving institutions to adjust themselves to the changed attitudes.

Conclusions

The lifetime experience as a social scientist and social reformer has taken Myrdal a long way from the simple trust in an easy and rapid advance through planning toward Utopia, which was his spiritual heritage. Today he is less idealistic in his approach to planning, and while he does not discourage it, suggests that we approach planning in something less than an optimistic mood. "It must imply strivings against heavy odds We need not the courage of illusory optimism, but the courage of almost desperation."³⁷

³⁶Ibid., p. 115.

³⁷Gunnar Myrdal, "Too Late to Plan?" (Address delivered before the American Institute of Planners Fifty-ninth Anniversary Convention in Washington, D. C., October 3, 1967; Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, January, 1968), p. 9.

Myrdal is not only a proponent of social-cultural planning, but is adamant in his insistence that the research scholar should have an active hand both in planning and implementation. This, of course, is bound to upset the research workers who vigorously eschew any participation in the practical applications of their work. Myrdal has laid down the challenge in plain words and has repeated it often enough.³⁸ Wishful thinking aside, it seems that there are some limitations on the matter of the research worker undertaking to set a public policy and to carry into effect a given plan. First, many research scholars are temperamentally and intellectually incapable of putting plans into action. Second, how many could assume the multiple role that Myrdal suggests as research worker, policy maker, and operating administrator?

As an economist and social reformer, Myrdal sought to regenerate mankind by reordering and repairing the social environment. The value conflicts associated with economic systems, forms of government, international relations, and race prejudice would have to be resolved. In Myrdal's schema, social change would have to occur within existing institutions. He rejected Marx's determinism. In contrast, real social change for Myrdal was determined by transformations in the minds of men.

³⁸Interview with Gunnar Myrdal, December 27, 1971.

Myrdal's social theory reveals the modification of his dictum that there were no primary factors in social change. In An American Dilemma the inference is made that a rational policy would never work by changing only one factor, least of all if it was attempted suddenly and with great force. The gradualist approach to social change was characteristic of Myrdal at this point in his career. As Myrdal surveyed the situation three decades later in South Asia, he classified factors in the vicious circle as primary and secondary. One felt a sense of urgency in his demands for social reform.

Myrdal fashioned a theoretical design for social change in his principle of cumulation. It is a theory founded on the concepts of deliberately induced planning and execution, reconciliation of value conflicts, and adjustment of beliefs to conform with facts and valuations and institutional change. It is basically a theory of linear culture progress and cyclical social change. Though it has been criticized as idealistic and incomplete, one cannot question its integrity.

Myrdal relied heavily on education to effect social reforms. He defines the dynamic of social change as the inevitable product of education. Though he did not develop a systematic educational theory, an examination of Myrdal's works reveals pedagogical implications. These will be discussed in chapter six.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL THEORIES

Introduction

There is thunder as well as dawn on the horizon in many countries of the third world. All too often, there were men in these countries who regarded political independence uncritically as the cure for the ills of underdevelopment. Those who offered this prescription are now haunted by a multiplicity of social problems and continuing poverty. The challenge and the complexities of the task of fulfilling the minimum aspirations of the peoples in the underdeveloped regions of the world are unsurpassed by any human endeavor except possibly the search for world peace. The necessity of producing enough food, initiating new modes of production and employment, and re-examining the values that guide men's lives demands a high degree of intra-national and international cooperation.

Regardless of where he turns, man is confronted by the inescapable evidence of social change. While social change is evident all over the world, it is especially true of one type of change--economic development. This term refers not only to the rise of secondary industry but also to the

associated political, social, cultural, and psychological changes in the conditions of living. Economic development may be in reality a dream, a painful transition from hope to actuality of a fait accompli. Regardless of its current stage, economic development is the dominant motif of the present and future for much of mankind.

The myth of paradise regained is lost on the millions who are exerting increasing pressure for the elimination of the disease, poverty, and ignorance which has been their lot in life. C. P. Snow remarked that industrialization is the only hope of the poor.¹ However, industrialization alone cannot provide a panacea for economic backwardness and poverty. It is but one factor of development and its advance is closely related to that of the other sectors of the economy. When Myrdal entitled his ten-year study of industrialization and development Asian Drama, the allusion to the tragedy of men caught up in the whirlwinds of others' making is real and powerful.

South Asia and India: Development and Industrialization

Myrdal found that the underdeveloped countries of South Asia evoked little interest until after the Second World War. This lack of interest among social scientists, particularly economists, in the extreme poverty and economic

¹C. P. Snow, The Two Cultures: A Second Look (New York: Mentor Books, 1963), p. 30.

stagnation in the underdeveloped countries and in their problems of economic development was clearly a reflection of the existing world political situation. Gradually, however, Myrdal noted that the climate had changed. The shift of emphasis to concern for the poverty and misery of the masses in South Asia could in a large measure be attributed to political expediency. International tensions culminating in the cold war brought the western world to grips with the reality of exploding populations in large areas of the world that could become a threat to our security. Myrdal believes the intellectuals in these countries understand that the giving of aid and heightened interest in their countries was due largely to world tensions.²

Myrdal pointed out that the political influences on western social research do not usually encourage unkind treatment of underdeveloped countries--as long as they are not hopelessly lost to the enemy bloc. The tendency to think and act in a diplomatic manner when dealing with the problems of the underdeveloped countries of South Asia had in the new era of independence become a counterpart of the "white man's burden" in colonial times, and created the necessity to "bend over backwards," (in Freudian parlance the "guilt" complex). Not only politicians but also scholars, who should be interested in objective truth, apologize for making slightly derogatory remarks and suggestions about conditions

²Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations (New York: Pantheon, 1968), pp. 8-9.

in other countries. As a result, such discretion leads to avoidance of certain problems and deliberate understatement of negative findings in research literature. Diplomacy of this kind is tantamount to condescension, while to speak frankly is to treat the nationals of these countries as equals.³

As research must of necessity start from a theory, a set of analytical preconceptions, the utilization of the tools and models that were forged in the West went against the grain with Myrdal. One of the main themes of his study was that the use of western theories, models, and concepts in the study of economic problems in the South Asian countries is a cause of bias, seriously distorting any study. One case in point is that the neat division of income into two parts, consumption and saving, is realistic in western societies where the general levels of income and a stratified system of income redistribution by social security policies and other means have largely abrogated any influence of consumption on productivity. This is not the case in the underdeveloped countries of South Asia.⁴

Throughout South Asia, agriculture continues to be the dominant branch of production. Productivity in agriculture is the main determinant of national levels of income and living. The figures for agricultural production in India

³Ibid., pp. 13-16.

⁴Ibid., pp. 17-18.

suggested to Myrdal that higher agriculture output per unit of land is an essential condition for raising levels of living and for supporting industrialization. Half the population of India lives on less than a quarter of the total available land, and one-third is concentrated on less than six per cent of the land. At the other extreme, vast areas continue to be almost uninhabited.⁵

In recent years there has been a rapid rate of urban growth in India without any significant industrialization, which is contrary*to western experience. In India this growth has been accompanied by relative stagnation of agricultural productivity, whereas in the West, urban growth resulted in an increase in output. Myrdal concludes that the principal cause of Indian urbanization must be an increase, relative to urban areas, in rural poverty and insecurity at least in certain strata of the rural population which creates a push towards the city. Urbanization is thus more a reaction against the lack of vigorous economic growth than a response to rising levels of income per head. According to Myrdal, "Instead of standing as a symptom of growth, as it was in the West, urbanization in South Asia is an aspect of continued poverty."⁶

As the overwhelming majority of the population in India receives its livelihood from agriculture, Myrdal's

⁵Ibid., pp. 282-285.

⁶Ibid., p. 471.

interest was focused mainly on man/land ratio, and on the utilization of the agricultural resources. In India, it is believed that by 1948-49 the income per head was almost sixteen per cent below the 1931-32 level. During the 1950's there was a slow but fairly steady rise in income, a little over one per cent per year over the decade, which seemed to be a reversal of the historic trend. The published statistics for the first two years of the 1960's suggested to Myrdal a virtual stagnation in net national output per head. Then after two years of fairly rapid advance, the last year of the Third Plan period of 1965-66, when a bad crop coincided with the war in Pakistan, brought the estimated national income per head down to the level it had reached in the first year of the plan period.⁷

The apparent trends for the future are more significant for Myrdal than the static picture of economic structure and productivity as it pertains to agriculture. About fifty-one per cent of India's national income originated in agriculture in 1950, while in 1958 the share remained relatively high at about fifty per cent. Substantial fluctuations in this share have occurred, and though there is some evidence of a decline, it is occurring at the "rate of a glacial drift." Myrdal concludes, however, that the only safe conclusion to be derived from the empirical material

⁷Ibid., p. 473.

is that far more needs to be done in the way of efficient data collection to ascertain what is in fact happening in the vital agricultural sector of the Indian economy.⁸

Another factor creating serious problems in the Indian economy is the increased duplication in governmental functions. Splitting of departments into new ones with parallel tasks tends to expand employment in the public sector at the expense of efficiency. Myrdal concedes that it may be true that efficient use of manpower is less essential when the labor force is large and when labor is generally underutilized. However, such a growth in bureaucracy causes delays in important developmental projects and is inherently inflationary since incomes are paid with no concomitant increase in output.⁹

Myrdal advanced as an explanation of the apparent increasing waste in the public sector, the pressure exerted by the so-called "educated" unemployed living in towns. They seek clerical positions and a high prestige is attached to civil service posts. The inability of the "soft state" to resist such pressures doubtless accounts for a rise in the number of lower civil servants out of proportion to real needs. This is, of course, counter to the modernization ideals.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 498.

⁹Ibid., p. 501.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 502-503.

Of all the countries in South Asia, only India possesses iron ore, coal, or power resources in quantities adequate for a high degree of industrialization. Mostly because heavy industry does not operate as close to capacity as consumer industry, but mainly because in India producer industries still constitute a very small economic sector, the industrial structure has not changed very much in India. The other outstanding feature is the overwhelming predominance of textiles in India, which reflects, according to Myrdal, a lack^e of diversity of output generally found in underdeveloped countries. In India, besides basic iron and steel, five major industries--cement, paper, cotton textiles, and sugar--account for sixty per cent of the employment in industries and generated about sixty per cent of the total value added.¹¹

Myrdal cautioned his reader about figures concerning the levels of living in India, levels of living defined as the amount of goods and services regularly consumed by the average person. These figures hid the high degree of inequality that exists in levels of living in India. Levels of living are important in themselves, and it is a major goal of planning for development in India to raise the abysmally low levels of living for the mass of the people. By the circular causation attending changes in social conditions, a rise in levels of living is likely to improve

¹¹Ibid., pp. 515-522.

almost all other conditions. In particular, labor input with improved efficiency should increase productivity and thereby create a change in social attitudes and institutions. Myrdal maintains that it is an important fact that a rise in levels of living has a much greater instrumental value in India than in the advanced countries. In the latter, levels of living are already so high that on the margin the productivity effect of a change is nil or slight.¹²

Milk consumption in India is rather high by South Asian standards, but this advantage is offset by reduced consumption of other animal foodstuffs. The low consumption of meat products throughout India leads to anemia due to iron deficiency. The monotony of the diet is not caused by poverty alone, although poverty is the main reason why people take to one staple food. Ignorance of the nutritional value of various foods and tastes that disregard nutritional considerations, together with poor methods of food preparation, also play a role. Religious taboos and traditions too play a part in the faulty diet. Myrdal continually refers to the vicious cycle of poverty, "lack of adequate diet reduces worker production, but the low level of productivity is in turn a key cause of poverty and thus of malnutrition."¹³

¹²Ibid., pp. 530-532.

¹³Ibid., p. 550.

The monotony observed in diet is carried over in clothing. While clothing is in general probably better suited to the climate conditions and needs than food is, there are millions in India who are poorly clothed. In India not less than ninety-five per cent of the houses occupied by industrial laborers are estimated to be unsatisfactory for healthful habitation. Rural housing is not much better. The greatest problem of all is perhaps the disposal of human waste. According to a recent estimate, roughly six^cper cent of the total population of India has a protected water supply, while only three per cent has a sewerage system, rural or urban.¹⁴

Industrialization is unquestionably of crucial importance for long-range development in India, but Myrdal feels the more immediate problem is agriculture. Agriculture will have to absorb most of the increase in the labor force for decades to come. Modern technology in western agriculture has been directed toward raising yields while the labor force has been declining. These developments do not fit the situation in India. Another reason why adoption of modern agriculture technology from advanced countries is not very practical for India, is that it is based on research of a kind of agriculture that operates under climatic and soil conditions different from those in India. Naturally, for Myrdal, the answer lies in planning to engender

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 545-568.

development by state intervention, in spite of all the mentioned difficulties.¹⁵

When weighing the reasons for and against public participation in the industrialization of India, Myrdal stressed that the interests of private business do not normally conflict with expansion of the public sector of big industry. Central among the reasons given for the planned enlargement of the public sector within big industry in India is the quest for equality, that is the desire to prevent a concentration of economic power in the hands of a few. Myrdal suggested that as long as private enterprise has not the ability to enter the industrial field on a large scale, India might well find it advisable to preserve a public sector of heavy industry.¹⁶

Another factor that impedes economic growth is that the need, and to a lesser extent, actual demand for imports have increased faster than the rate of increase in exports. To further complicate the problem, the West and many countries of the world are combining into trading blocs, and the failure of India and countries of South Asia to do this may lead them to systematic discrimination. Myrdal counsels the rich countries of the West that if they want India and the countries of South Asia to succeed, they must go out of their way not only to remove artificial restrictions against

¹⁵Ibid., p. 714.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 820.

South Asian manufactured goods, but also to create markets in their own countries. "An increase in manufactured exports is potentially more stimulating to an underdeveloped economy than bilateral foreign grants and loans which suffer great uncertainty and other shortcomings."¹⁷

To demonstrate his thesis concerning the inadvisability of using the West as a model for developmental planning in India, Myrdal notes some differences between India and the western world that are constant. He includes the following: (1) natural resource endowment, (2) land resources, (3) climate conditions. It is a fact of history that all successful industrialization in modern times has taken place in the temperate zones. Most western countries initiated economic development and industrialization from a base of self-sufficiency in food, and sometimes a surplus. Generally speaking, an agricultural revolution preceded their industrial revolution, which is not the case in India.¹⁸

Myrdal's investigation supported the assumption that extreme underutilization of labor is a characteristic in South Asian countries. The average output of the labor force in India is very low. The bulk of the labor force is embedded

¹⁷Ibid., p. 717

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 674-679.

in a climatic, social, cultural, and institutional matrix that not only tends to perpetuate present low levels of labor utilization, but also resists rapid and immediate adaptation to novel and unfamiliar ways of living and working.¹⁹

Aside from labor underutilization, Myrdal found the ownership of land and general land ownership practices had prevented progress in agriculture. One of the most serious economic consequences of European interference with traditional land tenure arrangements was the emergence in many parts of South Asia of a class of large private landowners whose activities were no longer circumscribed by custom. In India the conferring of full ownership rights on landlords may have caused little immediate change in the position of the individual peasant, who in the most cases had been paying tribute. As time went on, landowners were released from the obligation to respect the tenant's traditional right to cultivate the land. Now they could demand higher rent or get another tenant.²⁰

With the creation of individual titles to land, European intervention produced an environment in which the moneylender, another agent for change in the rural structure, could flourish. Once the land tenure system had been adapted to western concepts of private property, land became a

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 961-962.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 1036-1037.

negotiable asset. It could be used as security for loans, and in case of default, it could be forfeited and transferred. With the increase in land value, the moneylender may have discovered he had a positive interest in default, and thus could become the enemy of the village economy.²¹

The trend toward landlessness is expressed in many ways in India, particularly in the growth of the number of sharecroppers and the growth in the number of completely dispossessed who must now resort to wages. Various studies of Indian village life show a very high correlation between caste ranking and superior and inferior rights to land. This is also borne out by national statistics. Myrdal observed that the changes in land ownership have acted to intensify economic inequalities and to promote a more rigid social and economic stratification in rural areas. In India only twenty-four per cent of land was owned and operated by peasant landowners in 1955, and there is little evidence that this figure has changed appreciably. These tendencies toward economic polarization have been augmented by the deterioration in rural handicrafts.²²

The social and institutional environment of traditional agriculture places a high premium on abstention from productive work in India. Myrdal found that a sizable number of landowners fail to make any effective contribution

²¹Ibid., pp. 1039-1042.

²²Ibid., pp. 1050-1053.

to agricultural production. Surprisingly, there is little criticism for the most part of the low level of labor efficiency and the short duration of the work day and week in India. Inefficiency in work performance and considerable idleness are tolerated. In the main, there are no institutional spurs driving people to work and to work hard. Myrdal's contention is that there is no situation where income and levels of living could not be improved substantially by a larger and more intensive labor input.²³

In India there has been a tendency to glorify traditional forms of manufacturing and deplore their decline. Myrdal's research revealed that the vast majority of workers employed in manufacturing are in the traditional crafts and are represented by family-based cottage industries. In India, such workers constitute about seventy per cent of the industrial labor force. Generally, the output from these workers is substandard by western standards, and in the main, the workers are uneducated. From a rational planning point of view, the fact that the educated do not do manual work is an attitude that for Myrdal is obviously a hindrance to development.²⁴

Though there is a big push for industrialization in India, it will be some time before industry and manufacturing

²³Ibid., pp. 1092-1098.

²⁴Ibid., p. 1101.

can absorb much of the expansion of population in the working age groups. Paradoxically, unless a much larger proportion of the labor force can be effectively utilized outside agriculture, there is not much prospect that incomes and levels of living will be substantially improved. This means, in Myrdal's estimation, that India should industrialize as fast as she can, and this necessitates vigorous policy measures. The drive for industrialization has often served as an excuse for not pushing harder for reforms in other fields. According to Myrdal, "What India needs then in a program that will induce changes simultaneously in a great number of areas."²⁵

While advocating industrialization, Myrdal makes a strong case for protecting and promoting the craft industries in South Asia including India. In the villages, there is no alternative employment for most of the craftsmen, and this is the only way to improve their lot in life. Agriculture and household crafts must be induced to adopt modern techniques if they are to be successful enough to raise standards of living. In Myrdal's assessment, "To accept the ideal that agriculture and crafts, and often small-scale enterprises as well must remain technologically backward, and to confine planning efforts to building up enclaves of modern industrial enterprises is to invite failure on a

²⁵Ibid., p. 1149.

grand scale."²⁶

Myrdal believes that basically, the battle for long-term economic development in India will be fought with the plow. He maintains that without any innovations and even without any investment other than longer and more efficient work, agricultural yields could be raised very substantially. In India, about twenty-two per cent of the arable land is not cultivated, and the utilization of this land could also help to increase agricultural production.²⁷

Generally speaking, the rapidly accelerating population increase in all of South Asia, including India, Myrdal views as retarding economic advance and development. In facing up to their population problems and striving to formulate an appropriate policy, India is bound by one rigid value premise which has important practical consequences; any attempt to depress population growth is restricted to work on the fertility factor. Complacency about or even tolerance of high-level mortality because it slows population growth is simply not permissible. All that can reasonably be done to combat disease and to prevent premature death must be done regardless of the effect on population growth. Myrdal presents this value premise for what it is--a moral imperative.²⁸

In order to be successful, any effective organization

²⁶Ibid., p. 1241.

²⁷Ibid., p. 1253.

²⁸Ibid., p. 1496.

of the drive for disseminating birth control must be integrated with the general work of all social policy agencies, in particular, those working to lift levels of health and education. From his investigation, Myrdal concluded that everywhere in India a systematic bias operated to understate the urgency of the population problem. Myrdal suggests that the policy of stressing future economic difficulties of creating work opportunities for a growing population and labor force should be soft pedaled and the possibilities of immediate economic relief inherent in a reduction in the number of children be stressed.²⁹

Again, the western experience mitigates against a realistic appraisal of the situation in India, because many assume vaguely that birth control will spread spontaneously with industrialization as it did in the West. Myrdal asserts that a drop in fertility cannot be expected to come about spontaneously, but will only result from public policies aimed at spreading the practice of birth control among the masses. For Myrdal, population policy should be regarded as an integral part of economic policy.³⁰

Economic Development: Polarization
and the Cumulative Process

Myrdal's somber assessment of the situation in India

²⁹Ibid., pp. 1523-1525.

³⁰Ibid., p. 1526.

and South Asia generally delivers a sober warning for the future. He cautions that industrialization alone is not likely to raise the level of economic activity, nor will it absorb the annual increase in the labor force. Myrdal has long argued that the effects of the present system of world trade are harmful to the interests of underdeveloped countries.

The wide and increasing economic inequalities which exist between the more and the less developed regions of the world require a dynamic economic approach. In order to minimize the economic inequalities that polarize the underdeveloped economy and the progressive economy, consideration should be given to the processes that foster these polarizing tendencies. In Rich Lands and Poor, Myrdal has presented a "theory of regional polarization" that is imaginative and challenging and contains many important concepts of economic development.

Myrdal's formulation of a theory of this kind was stimulated by his great dissatisfaction with the orthodox theory of international trade and its underlying assumptions. This theory, he contends, has "developed in the direction of stressing even more the idea that trade initiated a tendency toward a gradual equalization of factor prices and incomes among nations." Yet Myrdal fails to see any such tendency. Rather he is impressed with the growing inequality of income among the advanced trading nations and those of the

so-called underdeveloped world. He attributes this failure of conventional economic theory to its assumption, among other factors, of the false and unrealistic analogy of stable equilibrium. This assumption, he points out, "dominates so much of the established theory, which implies belief that normally a change will call forth as reaction secondary changes with an opposite direction."³¹

Myrdal also assails the restriction of the analysis in the theory of international trade to economic factors. He contends that "the non-economic factors in such analysis cannot be taken as given and static. Myrdal says further on this point:

To define a certain set of phenomena as the economic factors, while keeping other things outside the analysis, is a procedure closely related to the stable equilibrium approach. For it is precisely in the realm of those noneconomic factors, which the theory of international trade usually takes as given and static, that the equilibrium assumption is most unrealistic and where instead, circular causation is the rule.³²

In general, then, Myrdal argues that the theory of international trade as well as economic theory in general were not developed to comprehend the reality of underdevelopment and development.

In place of the rejected theory, Myrdal boldly

³¹Gunnar Myrdal, Rich Lands and Poor: The Road to World Prosperity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 152. (Published under the title of Economic Theory and Under-Developed Regions, London: Duckworth, 1957).

³²Ibid., p. 157.

presents the elements of a more adequate general theory based on the ideal of circular causation of a cumulative process. It is his conviction that this "idea contains in nuce the approach to a more realistic analysis of social change--indeed a vision of the general theory of underdevelopment and development which we all are yearning for." These notions, Myrdal also believes, should be the main hypotheses when studying economic underdevelopment. He admits that his outline hardly gives more than a vision of what has to be accomplished before we can really talk about a general theory for the economic process.³³

Myrdal begins his own theorizing about social processes with the ideas "that in the normal case" there is no tendency towards automatic self-stabilization in the social system. He expands his theory as follows:

The system is by itself not moving toward any sort of balance between forces but is constantly on the move away from such a situation. In the normal case a change does not call forth countervailing changes but, instead, supporting changes, will move the system in the same direction as the first change but much further. Because of such circular causation a social process tends to become cumulative and to gather speed at an accelerating rate.³⁴

The concept of circular causation can be explained in terms of the vicious circle of development or underdevelopment

³³Ibid., pp. 13, 23, 103.

³⁴Ibid., p. 11.

that Myrdal has had so important a part in popularizing. He explains the concept of circular causation most clearly by means of the illustration of the vicious circle of poverty and disease. "Men and women were sick because they were poor, they became poorer because they were sick, and sicker because they were poorer." Myrdal acknowledges that these cumulative social processes can be stopped or counterbalanced, but he denies that the balance so established is a natural outcome of the forces within the system or that it is stable.³⁵

Myrdal conceives of social processes as being subject to two types of influences--market forces and governmental policies. Unhampered market forces, he contends, tend toward regional inequalities, because of the cumulative process (vicious or virtuous), they set off in the economy. This is especially true, in his view, in underdeveloped societies with weak spread effects, where the competitive forces of the market may contribute to these regional inequalities, while at the same time the latter will be discouraging economic development and weakening the power basis for egalitarian policies of the government. One of Myrdal's favorite concepts is the spread effects. These are the stimulating effects of expansionary momentum, which, acting

³⁵Ibid., p. 13.

cumulatively, move the growing sector of the economy toward higher levels of development. Opposing them are his so-called backwash effects--the unfavorable, cumulative depressing consequences of economic change.

Expansion in one locality may have backwash effects on the other localities: Myrdal himself states very confidently:

. . . More specifically the movements of labor, capital goods and services do not by themselves counteract the natural tendency to regional inequality. By themselves, migration, capital movements and trade are rather the media through which the cumulative process evolves--upward in the lucky regions and downward in the unlucky ones. In general, if they have positive results for the former, their effects on the latter are negative.³⁶

Myrdal takes note of the qualifications of this argument later. He recognizes that counteracting changes, such as higher wages in the advanced sector, a loss of entrepreneurial spirit and willingness to take risks in a quasi-monopolistic setting may weaken or stop the cumulative processes altogether. Nevertheless, he comes down on the side of cumulative rather than counteracting forces. "I do believe that when main trends over somewhat longer periods are under consideration, the changes will in the main support each other and thus tend to be cumulative in their net effects."³⁷

The migratory movement of labor, being selective,

³⁶Ibid., p. 27.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 35-37.

will tend to have cumulative effects favoring the growing region at the expense of the lagging ones. Similarly, Myrdal thinks, capital movements will tend to have the effect of increasing inequality. Investment in the expanding regions will increase incomes, savings will rise, making possible a second round of investment and increased employment. Trade too often operates with a bias in favor of the progressive regions and against the poorer ones. The former, with their larger plants (increasing returns to scale), may thwart the development of competing industries in the backward sections. The poorer regions, concentrating perhaps on primary staples, may confront inelastic demand in the export market, a slow growth in demand, and excessive price fluctuations. So, Myrdal concludes, "On the international as on the national level trade does not by itself necessarily work for equality. It may, on the contrary, have strong backwash effects on the underdeveloped countries."³⁸

Myrdal is equally imaginative and challenging in treating the role of the state in general economic development. Here he uses the term state to include "all organized interferences with the market forces." He goes on to observe that:

³⁸Ibid., pp. 51-52.

The traditional role of the "state" in this inclusive sense was mainly to serve as a means for supporting the cumulative process tending toward inequality. It was the economically advancing and wealthier regions and social groups which were the more active and effective in organizing their efforts, and they usually had the resources to stop organizational efforts by the others. And so the "state"--which stands here for organized society--usually became their tool in advancing their interests.³⁹

While this is a very broad and controversial concept of the state, it enables Myrdal to develop the idea that the pre-industrial state was in general an "oppressor state," and that with the industrial revolution and the spread effects, it had in certain advancing countries, there emerged the liberal state with its emphasis on equality of opportunity.

With the rising level of economic development there has been a movement toward a "welfare" state, though this trend has been subject to numerous detours and deviations historically. In advancing economies committed to a democratic philosophy and policies, there have been successive interferences with market forces, designed to improve what the classical economists called "the quality of the factors of production," and seeking also to prevent any region, industry or social group from lagging behind in development. Thus, Myrdal describes circular process in the relationship of economic advance to political development in these terms:

³⁹Ibid, p. 42.

Economic progress has supported and spread effects of expansionary momentum, hampered the trend toward inequalities, and thus also solidified the basis for democracy. It has at the same time created the easier conditions for mutual generosity which made the enactment of the equalizing state policies more possible. In its turn the greater equality of circumstances in these countries has sustained economic progress.⁴⁰

Myrdal has not sought to trace out the inter-relationships between the political life of a backward region or country and the backwash effects he alleges it experiences in its trade and commerce with the progressive entity. But the implications of his analysis for such a situation are clear: if economic progress generates tendencies towards a freer, more democratic and humanitarian society, economic retrogression or stagnation may promote a more restrictive, repressive and authoritarian regime. Myrdal would heavily underscore the "may." He is too sophisticated a social scientist and too non-doctrinaire to defend a crude economic determinism. In any case, he has left the complexities of this particular relationship for others to unravel. He does, however, touch on some elements of this problem when he analyzes the relationship between Negro and poverty, one result of the South's economic backwardness, and white prejudice, and demonstrates the circular causation involved therein. Myrdal's main emphasis, in regard to development, is that the interaction

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 47.

between the developing and the backward regions is not limited to economic factors but that the polarization process embraces important non-economic elements as well.

International Economic Policy Theories

The main theme of Myrdal's An International Economy is world economic integration. An economy is integrated if its members have equal opportunities which implies essential equality of wealth and income. At the outset of his examination of world economic problems, Myrdal states frankly that his analysis rests on a value judgment: that "economic integration is a good thing," and that "equality of opportunity is the keystone of economic integration." A second value judgment is "that the attainment and preservation of a democratic form of government is desirable."⁴¹

Myrdal recognizes that international integration must be based on national integration, and if we are to secure a new stable international system, it must be attained on new concepts and on different terms. Myrdal sees that the most "important symptom of the failure of international integration is the fact that so many countries, with such large populations are relatively so poor." Because of the increasing inequality among nations, Myrdal injects a note of pessimism in his prognosis for the future. He feels that

⁴¹Gunnar Myrdal, An International Economy: Problems and Prospects (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956).

it will take centuries to overcome national economic differences, and this signifies a glaring lack of international integration. As he so aptly phrases it: "there has been progress for some, but for mankind as a whole there has actually been no progress at all."⁴²

As Myrdal points out, labor migration, the international capital market and international aid have ceased to function as a factor of integration, and even tend to perpetuate stagnation in the underdeveloped regions. As he analyzes it, these things are the "products of integration, not the cause." For Myrdal, the major task in the process of international economic integration is to start the process of national integration in the poor and backward countries. These countries must achieve national integration in order to win bargaining power, and for Myrdal there is no short-term solution in attaining this goal. Another dimension to the problem is the general international disintegration due, in some measure, to the division of the world into two hostile camps.⁴³

It is logical to assume, as Myrdal does, that when international integration is held as an ideal, the corresponding political image, carried to its logical perfection, would be a democratic world government. Considering the social and

⁴²Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁴³Ibid., p. 4.

psychological climate that exists today, a democratic world government is inconceivable. Myrdal reminds us that the human solidarity present in the historical development of the national state does not exist on the international level. One can point to the international solidarity in a war alliance, but history teaches us that these are short lived and have not furnished a stable basis for continued international cooperation. In spite of these difficulties, Myrdal feels a compulsion to keep pressing on to international economic cooperation, even if accomplishments are only achieved on a modest scale.⁴⁴

At this point it seems advisable to clarify Myrdal's main concepts and to indicate briefly the dependence of his analysis on value premises. The term "economic integration" as used in this study signifies a goal of social change and has a positive value connotation. Implicit in the term is the notion of "internal and mutual adjustment of national communities rapidly brought into much closer interdependence." Closely related to "economic integration" is the concept of "economic development of underdeveloped countries," which symbolizes interests, ideals, aspirations, and visions on the international scene. These concepts at least in their present political significance are new. Both of these ideas in a sense are a response to the notion of world development which is

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 6.

politically significant as having as its essence a violent and radical breaking down of cultural isolation and the rising tide of expectations of the so-called backward nations.⁴⁵

Myrdal views economic integration as the realization of the old western ideal of equality of opportunity. This economic integration cannot occur until all of the social rigidities which in the past have prevented individuals from choosing freely the conditions of their work and life are removed. Customarily, many of the things that have to change in the social process directed towards the realization of this ideal are kept outside the economic analysis. Viewed in this light, Myrdal sees economic integration as a problem of political science, sociology, and social psychology, as well as economics. A natural corollary to this trend of thought is Myrdal's statement that "the gradual achievement of equality of opportunity assumes the emergence of the third world." A specific value premise of the study is that economic integration, both international and national, is desirable.⁴⁶

Myrdal looks to the common heritage of much more general ideals in western society than the theoretical concepts of the classical free market economy. For him, international economic integration is the realization of the same

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 12.

ideal of equality of opportunity in the relations between peoples of different nations. Myrdal's thesis is that the lack of advance in international integration is due to the following: (1) absence of social cohesion and solidarity across national boundaries, (2) the primitiveness and scarcely effective techniques of international political settlement, (3) the processes of national integration and the perfection of the national political machinery for advancement, which tend in the present state of world development to lower people's international allegiances. The results of the above are increased international disintegration.⁴⁷

Another value-laden concept is the "free world." The basic assumption of this term is that the aim of international integration is composed of national parts that are democracies. A corollary to this assumption is that political democracy is a favorable condition for strivings towards a higher degree of international integration, as well as national integration. As an ideal, a "free world" is as distant from reality as an integrated world. Therefore, Myrdal uses the term as an expression of the direction of a

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 17-22.

development that is desired but not an actual state of affairs. From this Myrdal derives as a general value premise for his study: "The attainment and preservation of a democratic form of government is desirable."⁴⁸

The increased opportunities for social mobility necessary to sustain economic development have not been brought about by the outlawing of social impediments, but rather by social reorganization. In this process, legislation was important from the beginning. Myrdal builds his case for planning by showing that the economic life of the individual in the integrated countries is very much regulated. He points to trade unions, professional and industrial associations as examples of this regulation. He also maintains that tax policy is regulatory:

As one of the important means of equalizing opportunities for individuals and of stamping out impediments to social mobility, vigorous measures have been taken to even out the differences in incomes and wealth. The advanced countries now have effective systems of taxes on income, capital and inheritance which are strongly progressive.

The gradual conditioning of citizens to pay taxes even when they constitute a heavy burden is a test of national solidarity. This solidarity must exist if people are to bear their share of common sacrifices when these are decided upon by due political process.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 15

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 28.

Myrdal is firmly convinced that in spite of the succession of international crises that have been pushing in the direction of national economic consolidation, during the last forty years, "national economic progress and integration can only reach the highest possible levels in a well-integrated world." However, he admits to serious obstacles in that the machinery for international cooperation is weak and ineffective, and that it lacks a solid basis in people's values and expectations. Internationalism tends more and more to be regulated to abstract utopianism, and in the world today appears as unrealistic and impractical dreams and theories, while economic nationalism is realistic and practical. For Myrdal, the only effective counterforce is "the knowledge, if it would be widely spread, of the very great gains that would accrue to all countries from every step however modest towards international cooperation."⁵⁰

Myrdal does not subscribe to the theory that developments in transportation and other means of communication automatically create a basis for greater international solidarity. In the short run, he feels that "popular awareness of cultural dissimilarities and conflicts of interest may have strong effects in the opposite direction." Another area that acts as an impediment to international cooperation

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 34.

is what Myrdal refers to as international legal anarchy. In the economic and financial sphere, the rule of international law has been severely weakened by the now accepted practice that belligerent states can do as they please with enemy property. Myrdal sees this as a severe blow to the basic principle of the old international law that foreign property is inviolable.⁵¹

Another area that demands our attention in the quest for international economic integration is the discrimination against foreign trade and restrictive controls of foreign payments invoked to defend full employment. Here in America, workers have had a long-standing tradition of regarding protective tariffs as a justifiable defense of their own living standards. The fact is that we are outpricing ourselves in the international market. As Myrdal describes this, it is "nationalism being stronger than reason."⁵²

In almost all advanced countries, the farmers have been subsidized by the government and following the principle of solidarity citizens have accepted this. However, it has never seriously been considered that this expression of solidarity should expand beyond the state. Instead, it is Myrdal's contention that the international market has "been freely used as a dumping ground, hurting particularly

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 34-35.

⁵²Ibid., p. 39.

those exporting countries that have narrow margins and have to count their foreign exchange carefully."⁵³

Myrdal alludes to the double standard practiced by governments in regard to international cartels. In order to protect the consumers from exploitation, restrictive legislation has been passed, but this kindly interest has not been extended to the protection of the foreign buyer. In the international markets, cartels have so far been given free play. "Directed towards the outside, monopolistic exploitation becomes a patriotic virtue."⁵⁴

The solution of the conflict between national and international integration is not the preaching of internationalism and denouncing nationalism, but rather a further development of national integration and a breaking down of national barriers. As Myrdal states:

The whole movement towards international integration along these lines will have to be argued in positive terms of the wider community of interests and aspirations, not the negative integration.⁵⁵

The crux of the problem is, however, that to start the international system moving upwards towards cooperation and integration, instead of downwards, as in recent years, would itself require fundamental changes of popular attitudes. Myrdal is not optimistic because, as he sees it, the process

⁵³Ibid., p. 42.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 47.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 51.

of national integration makes the need for international integration even greater, while at the same time acting as an impediment to it.

An extra obstacle to international integration is the fact that no country in Western Europe is prepared to accept a significant increase in unemployment or even a serious scaling down of living standards in one industry as the price of economic integration. The peoples of Western Europe also lack the solidarity that would permit them to think in terms of a common development, and to shoulder an effective attack on the problem of inequality. Myrdal looks to the practical question of what can be done to strengthen the psychological and ideological basis that underlies this problem, and in so doing reaffirms his faith in people.

Political leaders have always to some extent accepted prevailing attitudes. But the mark of great times has always been that the leaders have themselves reshaped the attitudes of their peoples and so changed the conditions for practical policy. I believe that our West-European nations have hitherto unexploited reserves of generosity and common sense--if the issues are squarely brought home to the peoples.⁵⁶

Myrdal pays homage to America when, in discussing the post-war aid program, he expresses the feeling that the Americans were more conditioned in advance to believe in the feasibility of plans for integration and to do so wholeheartedly and honestly. Myrdal lays the blame for the

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 1065.

failure of the strivings towards West-European economic integration on the European politicians, not on the American aid program. He feels, however, that the interest in securing American financial aid distorted West-European planning for economic integration. In Myrdal's schema, the Western European now has an urgent duty to carry out the type of simple psychoanalysis necessary to dispel the complex of displaced aggression that has been turned against the Americans.

While the⁶ large-scale Marshall Plan did not contribute directly towards the economic integration of Western Europe, Myrdal sees it as very effective in promoting the national integration of the separate states in Western Europe.

This capital influx from America, together with Western Europe's own exertions and the favorable business climate in the post-war era, accompanied by an appreciable inflationary pressure, enabled almost all those countries to maintain a high level of investment and employment and to raise production substantially.⁵⁷

Without the general milieu of expanding production and rising living standards, the resulting economic stagnation would, in Myrdal's opinion, lead inevitably to spark the autarkic tendencies that have been at work for several decades. In Western Europe Myrdal sees national expansion as a prerequisite for renewed and strengthened efforts toward international integration.

Myrdal mourns the loss of the freedom for the individual

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 84.

to migrate, if he wants, for economic purposes, and the consequent cessation of those marginal two-way movements of population within the European continent and elsewhere, which could be a real factor making for economic adjustments and for cohesion and international solidarity. The common people, who do not happen to be leaders specialized in the international fields, are as tied to their land of birth as firmly as in feudal times when the serf was tied to the estate of his lord. For Myrdal, this national bondage for the common man operates against the development of a feeling of belonging to a world and not merely to a small part of it; it operates against international solidarity.

Economic progress requires a general lessening of the rigid class system in the stagnating national communities. The inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth have wide social and political ramifications. A very considerable political difficulty in Myrdal's view in carrying out these reforms, is the poverty of these countries and the compelling necessity they are under to prevent consumption of the masses from rising very much and very fast, in order to save for economic development:

Redistributional reforms that do not protect national savings not only fail to open up any advance to economic development but will even bring about a deeper and more widespread poverty.⁵⁸

There is the possibility that the redistributional reforms

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 181.

may even cause a decrease in productivity which would make attempts to raise consumption even more disastrous. In addition to land reform, these countries need progressive taxation. Myrdal warns that they will have to tread this road with utmost care in order not to destroy the forces for economic development.

National unity, land reform, and the loosening up of the rigid economic class structure are only a part of the great initial social adjustment necessary to releasing the forces for national integration and economic progress. In Myrdal's schema of cumulative causation, all the factors in the process of change are interdependent, being causes as well as effects. Perhaps the most important single element in a national integration program is educational reform, and for Myrdal, the most important single element in educational reform is a determined literacy drive.⁵⁹

Technical assistance has been very popular in the industrially advanced countries largely because it appears as a cheap means of aiding the underdeveloped countries to accomplish economic development. Myrdal does not see technical assistance but rather credits and capital aid as the method of aiding underdeveloped countries. For the industrial countries to offer technical assistance alone is self-deception because the technical assistance is apt to

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 196.

mobilize the latent needs for capital.⁶⁰

Myrdal's study of the problems of commercial policy of underdeveloped countries shows the bitter failure of the brave plans drawn up in the closing years of World War II and immediately after to alleviate their difficulties in foreign trade by international action to stabilize commodity prices, instigate compensatory capital movements, control industrial cartels, and increase the flow of capital. The only recourse left to the underdeveloped countries is self-help and a national policy designed in the national interest. Myrdal sees the necessity of the underdeveloped countries stabilizing savings on a relatively high level, and doing so under the given conditions of extremely low levels of consumption, with little or no capital inflow, and with widely fluctuating export proceeds.⁶¹

The responsibility for what will happen to the trend of international economic relations, in Myrdal's eyes, falls mainly upon the industrially advanced countries. He feels that the peoples of the advanced countries should gradually be educated to make the sacrifice of an increasing amount of international aid to underdeveloped countries. Myrdal's fear is that the industrially advanced countries will continue to stall on all practical matters of international cooperation, and at the same time, bitterness will grow in

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 260-265.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 296-304.

the underdeveloped countries where stagnation will persist and economic development in any case will be uneven and too slow. Myrdal does not, however, acquiesce to fatalism and he writes as follows:

The future is not a blind destiny but is, instead, our responsibility. We have the powers to analyze the facts and to establish rationally the practical implications of our ideals. We have the freedom to readjust our policies and, thereby to deflect and change them.⁶²

Psychological Impediments in Foreign Relations

Quite naturally the economic aspect of international cooperation and development and its obvious hallmark of economic interdependency is the focal point of Myrdal's work. However, he also carried forward in his research the development and integration of psychology as well as social action. The common denominator in international relations is the basic objective for lasting peace. Myrdal approached the problem of creating a universal will for peace from the standpoint of the psychological impediments to effective international cooperation when he prepared his Kurt Lewin Memorial Award address in 1952.

The attitudes that color peoples' opinions about foreign affairs often result from concentrations on unfortunate international incidents. Myrdal believes the public has become conditioned not to believe too much in publicity,

⁶²Ibid., p. 335.

except of course when it is "discrediting, antagonistic and aggressive." Peoples' attitudes are often a combination of impulses of aggression and hostility which are so deeply embedded in human beings. He considers these factors a result of the bewilderment and the insecurity of squeezed ambitions and inhibited desires. Considered in this light, the increased interest in foreign affairs serves and is stimulated by what Myrdal regards as the "need felt for an outlet for suppressed hostility."⁶³

Foreign policy in some respects is more dependent on public opinion than national policy. Myrdal's experience in international affairs lead him to conclude that in general peoples' attitudes are immensely more sensitive and unstable, and less realistic and dependable in international affairs than in internal affairs. Myrdal finds it ironical that while it is commonly taken for granted that planning and preparation should precede a big change in social security or housing policy, this same criterion is not applied to foreign policy. From his observations, he concludes that it is actually simpler to effect a change in foreign policy than to effect a comparable domestic change.⁶⁴

The inclinations to "get tough" with outside nations

⁶³Gunnar Myrdal, "Psychological Impediments to Effective International Cooperation," The Journal of Social Issues, Supp. Series No. 6 (1952), pp. 12-13.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 15-16.

are so common in current society, that they are equated with patriotism in Myrdal's eyes. Thus the "get tough" stand becomes a national virtue and an easy substitute for true national maturity. Growing tourism, which at best is a superficial contact, has not prevented cultural isolation between the inhabitants of different nations. If anything, it has tended to increase the international psychological strain. Myrdal finds, "Growing cultural isolation under increasing physical proximity undoubtedly adds stress to the difficulties in international cooperation."⁶⁵

At best, Myrdal considers international political organizations as "primarily organs for inter-state negotiations, and possibly mediators in arbitration." He laments the tendency to leap for the fantasy of a panacea, which he terms as escapism, for future international cooperation. He also evidences concern for the American tendency towards "unfounded optimism," which can "back-fire when the course of events corrects opportunistic false beliefs." Myrdal assesses the problems to be solved regarding future international cooperation as follows:

The psychological impediments to overcome in making international cooperation more effective are all concerned with how to get governments, and behind them parliaments and ultimately the

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 19-21.

peoples, to experience allegiance to the common cause, and to do this when, in fact, international cooperation is still so weak.⁶⁶

Conclusions

The message for underdeveloped lands in Myrdal's The Challenge of World Poverty,⁶⁷ which is both a summary and an extension of Asian Drama is clear and unequivocal. The path to prosperity must be traveled by each nation through its own efforts. In describing the social landscape of the underdeveloped world, Myrdal presents a picture of rigid, highly stratified societies, with numbers privileged in wealth, power and status lording over underprivileged masses. Myrdal found that the more backward the country, the wider the inequalities. This deep disintegration is, again, as he pictures it, evidence of circular cumulative causation.

It is Myrdal's contention that industrialization alone cannot provide a panacea for the economic backwardness and poverty of the underdeveloped nations of the world. This theory is supported by Paul Hoffman's conclusions regarding industrialization in underdeveloped countries. Hoffman, recently retired as head of the United Nations Development

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 31.

⁶⁷Gunnar Myrdal, The Challenge of World Poverty: A World Anti-Poverty Program in Outline (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

Program after thirteen years, considers it an illusion that you can industrialize a country by building factories. He aligns himself with Myrdal when he says "you industrialize a country by building more markets."⁶⁸ Myrdal also encourages America to consider "trade not aid" when considering foreign economic policy.

In several areas in his International Economy, Myrdal is strongly reminiscent of Max Weber. The most obvious is his more than ritual genuflection at the high altar of the Protestant ethic as the main pillar of capitalism and, hence, progress. He apparently concurs with Weber in the notion that western civilization is unique in that scientific rationality has pervaded other areas of life to an extent unprecedented elsewhere. Myrdal, like Weber, sees an increasing rationalization in a variety of institutional spheres as a hallmark of western civilization. The burden Myrdal places on the shoulders of political leaders as instruments to direct attitude development is reminiscent of Weber's charismatic leader. Though Myrdal's national integration cannot be equated with the idea of the nation state, these two concepts have elements in common. National integration for Myrdal, however, is propaedeutic to international integration.

⁶⁸"Hoffman's Decade of Aid," Time Magazine, January 17, 1972, p. 31.

While proponents of the Third World advocate negation of the nation state concept, Myrdal proposes utilizing the principles and policies of national integration in order to achieve international integration. Here Myrdal is speaking in Hegelian terms. The road to the Third World for Myrdal lies in the economic realm, but his vision encompasses a social totality not restricted to the means and methods of production, consumption, and trade.

What Myrdal is suggesting in An International Economy assumes an alliance with educational institutions. People would have to be conditioned to a change in attitude, valuations, and beliefs as a prerequisite to change in economic policies designed to aid the less fortunate of the world's population. Therefore, it is a sine qua non that interaction between economic planners and educators must occur. This theme will be treated in chapter six.

CHAPTER VI

MYRDAL'S EDUCATIONAL POSITION

Introduction

As an economist and social scientist, Gunnar Myrdal is well aware that illiteracy and ignorance only deepen the malaise of poverty of people the world over. These factors also contribute to a far more malignant development prevalent today, private and public alienation from society. Myrdal would break faith with the tenets of his institutional economics if concern for the problems of illiteracy, the general level of education of the masses and the institutional structures for education were not evident in his work. In his research, Myrdal adopted the scientific approach, gathering information without moralizing or attempting to fit the information into a preconceived world view. His entire modus operandi reveals his commitment to making the world a better place by the use of rational means.

Myrdal's concern for education is explicit and implicit in his writings. Since he is not devoted to model building, it would be inconsistent to attempt to develop an educational model from his social theories. However, an analysis of the

educational prescriptions for underdeveloped nations in Myrdal's Asian Drama could conceivably shed new light on the task that confronts education not only in underdeveloped nations but in America as well. A parallel could be drawn between many of Myrdal's findings in South Asia, and the educational nuances for the minority and culturally deprived groups in the United States.

Kontakt Med Amerika

The prescriptions that Myrdal outlines for education reflect his early exposure to the philosophy of John Dewey and the American public school system at a time when Dewey's philosophy and progressivism were at the height of their glory. As a young man, Myrdal and his wife, Alva, spent time in America and wrote of their experiences in Kontakt Med Amerika. Myrdal viewed with favor the various types of experimentation he found operating in many American schools. He admired the consistency of the goals in American education and concurred with the flexible method of obtaining these goals. He was generous in his praise of the American system generally which he used as an exemplar for educational reforms in Sweden. Many of the impressions and experiences the Myrdals had during this period left them with an affection for the American people and a profound respect for their progress in public education.¹

¹Alva Myrdal and Gunnar Myrdal, Kontakt Med Amerika (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Forlag, 1941), pp. 93-106.

In Kontakt Med Amerika, Myrdal expressed approval of the scientific method employed in the American schools and saw in the problem solving approach the means to developing critical thinking. He concurred with the prevailing philosophy of the period that the stress in schools should be on the environment rather than on the heritage. Throughout his writings over the years, many of Myrdal's opinions regarding education were stated in terms of Dewey's philosophy. Myrdal viewed education as a continuing process and considered growth and experience as endemic to education. Myrdal, like Dewey, viewed democracy as the natural cradle in which to nurture the educative process.²

Education and Social Change

Planning based on rational policy is a necessary condition of Myrdal's theory of social change. Social change no doubt needs anger and perhaps even a measure of despair to prompt it. But it also needs the voice of reason if it is not to be a change for the worse. Change must be in the desired direction. This, of course, requires rational planning, not a crash program triggered by emotions.

Myrdal defines the dynamics of social change as the inevitable product of education. One of the determinants of social change is the transformation in the social institutions that support the socio-cultural superstructure. Another

²Ibid., pp. 110-121.

determinant is the reconciliation of value conflicts and adjustment of beliefs to conform with facts and valuations. In positing these theories, Myrdal relied extensively on education to affect social change, though he never developed a systematic educational theory.

In Myrdal's schema, social change may originate in any institutional area, bringing about change in other areas. This in turn causes further adaptations in the initial sphere of change. Education, then, is one of the factors that is viewed as an independent variable which influences each other as well as the course of society. When Myrdal speaks of the factors that produce social change, he maintains that no one factor is primary but rather admits to a "strategic" force that can give the initial "push" necessary to effect social change. Education is considered a "strategic" force as it is one of the factors that can induce social change.

The exact role that education played in bringing about the past transformation of society is debatable. The expectation that education can be of singular significance in bringing about progress in race relations or poverty may be well founded. However, it must be remembered that there are other social institutions that interact within a given social system.

Throughout human history, change has been relatively gradual and based on chance discoveries of solutions to the practical problems of survival and organization. Historically, attention to change was frequently limited to one sphere

and resulted from the conscious efforts to alter or improve a technique or an institution. In recent times, attempts have been made to anticipate resultant changes in related activities. Attempts to anticipate and influence the consequences of change is planning.

Myrdal is committed to the mechanism of educational change called educational planning. Many of the nations of the world have a similar commitment. Capitalistic countries like the United States are still self-conscious about the socialistic implications of national planning in any field. Myrdal found, in general, that business men are more amenable to planning, as they are accustomed to thinking in terms of long-range goals. This suggests that the business community's contribution to education could be in the area of planning.

Two important constraints on any approach to educational planning derived from Myrdal's theories should be emphasized. First, the analysis of educational needs without consideration of the cost involved remains academic. A surprising amount of activity that purports to be educational planning neglects national fiscal ability. To some extent, plans are often confused with planning. While the plan is but a document, planning is a continuous process involving constant reassessment of social and economic benefits. Secondly, there is a political act involved, as decisions regarding education as well as health and defense are part of the political process. This

means that successful educational planning will depend not only on the good will of the politician but also on the support the political leaders are willing to commit to educational planning. Unfortunately, educational planning frequently degenerates into projections of educational expansion. In retrospect, the latter remark could be applied to the enrollment explosion in the American universities during the sixties. The current financial plight in these universities is, in part, the result of unplanned expansion. The fact that our universities are still preparing people for overcrowded fields with limited job opportunities lends credence to the notion that there has been a lack of meaningful planning on the part of these universities.

Within his conceptual framework of social change, Myrdal does not elevate any factor to a primary position. Thus we need more than the one initiating change from outside the "system" comprising the social problem. Education alone will not eradicate poverty. But education coupled with impetus from other social factors can produce change. Improved diet and nutrition and improved living conditions can effect mass education. Hopefully, this will result in increased employment and social acceptance.

The practice of school busing to achieve racial balance in the schools can be examined in the context of circular and cumulative causation. The push for change--busing--is the one and only initiating factor utilized. The stage had not been set

for social change. No inroads had been made into the traditions, the pride, the prejudices and the practices of both white and black America. Consequently, the one factor--busing--could not gain enough momentum to overcome resistance.

Adult Education

Adult education has a high priority among Myrdal's proposed solutions to poverty and ignorance in South Asia. It would serve a dual purpose. In India, Myrdal feels that adult education could help equip adults in their day-to-day living and prepare them for jobs in a changing society. Of course, adult education will also facilitate the education of the children at a faster pace. Myrdal is concerned about the detrimental effects of an illiterate home and village setting which begins in the pre-school years. These are singularly formative years when attitudes are shaped that will tend to persist.³ The findings of Piaget and Bruner would support Myrdal's claim. Their studies indicate that children learn at a very early age and that early childhood education is important in eliminating bias and prejudice, as well as in learning skills.

In Myrdal's opinion, adult education should be more important in underdeveloped countries than in developed

³Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama, An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations* (New York: Pantheon, 1968), pp. 1724-1801.

countries where almost all are literate. Therefore, quite different problems are posed in the developing nations in regard to adult education. The educational experts from western nations are often operating in a different level of development than of the host nation. Myrdal is adamant in his opposition to imposing western models of any kind and particularly educational models in South Asia. This was evident in his recommendations for solving the problems of illiteracy and ignorance in India.

Rather than taking the child away from the family and sending him to school western style, Myrdal saw possibilities in a program of teaching families or whole communities. In this area Myrdal is in accord with Gandhi's thinking of preserving the social structures of the Indian villages and utilizing them to speed up social progress. It would seem that what Myrdal is suggesting is that cultural borrowing should be exercised with caution. The American educational experience shows the errors of borrowing educational institutions. The transplant from England of the Latin Grammar School and the Academy did not take. These institutions required altering in order to suit the needs of their new environment.

Adult education requires vigorous efforts to gain acceptance. Without a fundamental change of attitudes on the part of the "educated," a large-scale adult education campaign in the underdeveloped countries is not possible.

Myrdal thinks that the universities should be engaged in this effort. This, incidentally, would benefit both the teachers and the students. It would bring them both nearer to the acute problems of their countries, and in turn would give their studies and lives more purpose and meaning. In effect, Myrdal proposes an attempt to bridge the gap between theories and the realities of life.

Myrdal's confidence in the positive results to be achieved via adult education may be the result of his Swedish conditioning. Adult education is considered important in Sweden. In fact, the interest in adult education has almost tripled during the past sixteen years. Herman Erickson of the University of Illinois, in his study of "Adult Education and Swedish Political Leadership," defined adult education as an "informal type of education which is aimed at those persons who have some experience with the normal adult responsibilities of life."⁴

In his study, Erickson equates the growth and development of adult education and the formative years of Swedish democracy. A breakdown of the educational background of members of Parliament shows a majority (seventy-nine per cent) of the Social Democrats seem to have relied more on informal adult education than on the formal education system for their training. Modern democracy must be concerned with equality and human need,

⁴Herman Erickson, "Adult Education and Swedish Political Leadership," International Review of Education, XII (June, 1966), p. 131.

and Erickson concluded from his research that this sense of social responsibility called for is most likely to be generated by an adult education system of the type found in Sweden. Although Erickson's survey was limited, it seemed to indicate that adult education played an important role in the successful functioning of Swedish democracy.⁵ This happy experience of adult education in Sweden bears scrutiny.

Adult education has different curriculum connotations for a primitive society as is found in rural India than in an urbanized American ghetto. In both instances, the requirements of fulfilling human basic needs requires basic skills. Training in health standards, nutrition and dietary needs, birth control and even the rudimentary skills required for minimal standards of sanitation are necessary. If the children are to learn the proper techniques involved in decent standards of living, the adults must be aware of them. If we are to improve living standards, this must include the participation of all individuals. Myrdal holds education responsible for providing people with the equipment, morally and physically, that will enable them to improve their lot in life. He regards education as a never ending process extending beyond the formative years into adulthood.

Technology and Vocational Training

In Asian Drama, Myrdal expressed concern for the lack

⁵Ibid., pp. 129-143.

of skilled workers in India. He viewed this as an impediment to industrialization and development. He attributed the relatively low supply of skilled workers in part to the fact that there was little vocational training in India. Also prevailing social attitudes, such as contempt for manual labor and the wage earner, the glorification of self-employment and the high regard for the family cottage industries, mitigate against interest in vocational training in India. By definition, vocational training refers to the development of specific job skills.

Technology is another aspect of development and industrialization that requires trained manpower. Galbraith defines technology as "the systematic application of scientific or other organized knowledge to practical tasks."⁶ When organized knowledge is brought to bear on performance, the task is divided and sub-divided into its component parts. Technology requires specialized manpower. The more sophisticated the technology, the greater will be the requirements.

Myrdal considers technology an important ingredient of social and economic progress. Technology not only causes change but results from change. It both causes and effects specialization. It is perhaps one of the major forces which influences values and education in any society. By its nature, technology involves planning, and in Myrdal's schema would increase the role of government in planning.

⁶John Kenneth Galbraith, The New Industrial State (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1971), p. 12.

In any society, the level of technology has a great effect on school organization, curricula, teacher qualifications, and the nature of students. Technology greatly affects available employment possibilities. It has created countless new jobs and many entirely new occupations. Galbraith and others have cogently pointed to the effect on values caused by the abundance created through technology. We have been so concerned with the material things in life provided by technology that we are neglecting the human and spiritual aspects of life.

Technology demands a broadened curriculum in schools, and the derivative effects of this process are numerous. Reorganization of schools has enabled greater specialization and has created its own demands for highly specialized preparation. The teacher has been forced to become more specialized. Specialization can be dangerous since it can further dehumanize the technological process. Technology does, however, free human resources in that a highly developed nation does not find it necessary to devote all of its physical energy to providing for minimum physical needs. Myrdal saw the need to radically change the schools in order to promote attitudes that would accept technology. Rather than build up enclaves of modern industrial enterprises, Myrdal encouraged agriculture, crafts, and small-scale enterprises in India to accept some of the advances of technology.⁷

⁷Myrdal, Asian Drama, p. 1241.

Myrdal distinguishes technical education from vocational training. The criterion of vocational training is judged in terms of the extent to which the skills acquired are transferable into skill in other trades. Technical training is judged on the basis of application of scientific knowledge to the task to be performed. The right balance between vocational training, technical education, and academic education can only be struck if due weight is given to the prospects of mobility and change, in Myrdal's view. He would not oppose vocational training^c in business and industry. Myrdal would promote any type of training that provides for social mobility.

Banfield has also suggested that business and industry could take over some of the training that is currently being done by the school. Banfield, however, is operating with a different set of assumptions than Myrdal. He sees the solution to the problems of urban education as one of class rather than racial discrimination. According to Banfield, the lower-class culture is a barrier to learning and education in the traditional sense. He claims that the elements necessary for education are the values of the middle- and upper-class people, which are rejected by the lower classes. Therefore, he would allow urban youth to leave the traditional school and go to work where he can receive vocational training in an environment suited to his needs.

In both America and India, there is a need for a change in attitudes regarding vocational training. In India, an

attitude must be fostered to provide the skilled labor necessary for industry to enlarge and thereby increase employment and levels of living. There is a need for technicians in both the United States and in India. This is especially true in India where machinery and other technological instruments need competent repair and service personnel. Unfortunately, prevailing social attitudes in India tend to work against the preparation of such individuals. Service positions lack the prestige that is accorded to civil service and other "white collar" kinds of positions. In America, vocational training provides an escape hatch for those who are unable to accept general education. The recommendation of Myrdal's that business and industry provide for vocational training is sound. All too often the schools impart vocational skills that are obsolete, and at best provide an artificial environment for vocational training.

Value Conflict Reduction and the Educative Process

Attempts to impose or effect a change in values which have a national consensus creates some rather difficult problems within our society, whether the attempts are made through the schools, the informal process of community living or by means of the law. In recent years, driven by the consensus of moral conscience, Americans have attempted to improve and promote racial harmony in some communities through the force of law. These efforts have not been an unqualified

success.

Value conflicts play an important role in social dislocations. Myrdal places moral conflict, which in his theory is the result of valuation conflict, at the very heart of social problems. That is why we need what he calls a "catharsis" to reduce conflicts in valuations. A "catharsis" is a type of self-healing process involving value conflict resolution resulting from elimination or correction of false beliefs and valuations. Myrdal would employ rational means to induce this "catharsis." He conceives the formal institutions of education as instruments to promote and achieve rationality and correct false beliefs in order to induce the necessary "catharsis."

Myrdal does not subscribe to the traditional value hierarchy and within his theory establishes a dichotomy of values. He contends that values exist on two planes, the higher and the lower. Values on the higher plane are generally goal oriented, are held collectively, and frequently tend to be moral imperatives. Values on the lower plane are held individually and are based on beliefs and knowledge which can be true or false, or opportunistic.

Any consideration of values must underline the confusion and conflict apparent in societies as well as within individual living within a given society. Conflict and confusion in lower plane values constitute strength for the open society in that individuals are relatively free to develop and free to choose

between the conflicting winds of opinion based on beliefs. This free choice enables careful investigation of facts and alternatives and greatly enhances the possibility of correct choices. The selection of correct choices should be enhanced by the educative process.

Values exist and their roots are often deep and conceivably indestructible in their totality. The only absolute which can be safely stated about values is that they change, sometimes violently as in the case of revolution and sometimes by evolutionary process. However, there is always change. Myrdal envisions education and rationality as an ever increasing factor in lower plane value change. Education affords the individual the opportunity to become aware of the true facts of social reality and thereby correct false beliefs and induce change in lower plane values. With the general increase in the level of education of the people, it naturally follows that there is a greater appeal to rationality.

Man-made environmental change is necessarily induced by conscious efforts to effect change in lower plane values. Sweeping changes in environment which are man-made may occur without thought of consequences to existing values--without Myrdal's planning. Inventions and adaptations which grow out of technology, however, are not planned and determined efforts designed to change men's thinking with respect to traditionally held lower plane values. Such efforts are generally incidental

or accidental. The few exceptions to such accidental effects of the introduction and application of technology to the environment are those which are deliberately planned, generally through some agency of the political state.

Certainly the environment in the sense of time and place has some effect on lower plane values. A traditional or primitive society, based on an agrarian economy, has fewer alternatives from which to choose than a highly developed society. Traditional tribal lower plane values strongly held by a larger number^c of the population continue to present a serious obstacle to progress even though a given nation may possess rich natural resources.

In industrial nations, man is faced with a great variety of alternatives from which he must pick and choose. These decisions may be so frequent and so demanding, that the values by which things are judged, the criteria which provide the bases for selection from several alternative courses of action, get a real workout. Indeed, the environment may be moving so rapidly that existing lower plane values are not adequate to serve in an industrial society. He may not have a system that is adequate to cover all the possible situations which rush upon him and necessitate some decision on his part. Contrast this situation with that in a primitive society in which things move more slowly and in which there are fewer questions and more answers. Custom and tradition thus can play a much stronger role and provide a more certain guide

for behavior.

The preceding analysis of the various factors and alternatives involved in value change are evident in Myrdal's research both in an industrial and an agrarian or primitive society. These changes involving lower plane values frequently result in value conflict. The main thrust of Myrdal's argument concerning value conflict resolutions is that basically this solution lies in the cognitive realm. He admits that indirectly lower plane values change can be induced by various means. Thus, we can have a lower plane value change induced by ideological and political change--value indoctrination. Lower plane value change can also be induced by economic and technological change, and changes in demographic factors. Ultimately, resolution of value conflicts for Myrdal, however, lies in the corrections of beliefs that underscore lower plane values, thus bringing lower and higher plane values in accord.

How does Myrdal correct lower plane values? He corrects beliefs by appeal to facts and rationality. Myrdal's classic example is the value-conflict that was in the heart of the white man in the South. The white southerner had great respect for the American ideal of equality. Nevertheless, he practiced and condoned prejudicial treatment of the Negro. In order to rationalize his lower plane value--inferiority of the Negro--he adopted false beliefs that supported this value. Eventually the beliefs were corrected by acquisition of

knowledge and facts, and lower plane values were changed to coincide with higher plane values.

Myrdal would subscribe to the notion that the schools in a sense can teach values. The schools can correct false beliefs by imparting facts and knowledge. Ideally, Myrdal sees this process as terminating in the change of lower plane values and in an ensuing resolution of value conflicts. He recommends that the school subject lower plane values as well as beliefs to critical inquiry and analysis.

One of the objectives of the women's liberation movement involves the utilization of the schools to invoke social change. In an attempt to redefine the social, economic, and political position of women in contemporary society, leaders in the liberation movement have leveled a frontal attack on the female image traditionally portrayed by school practices and curricula. The female image pictured in textbooks for the young has been that of the happy housewife. A subtle type of indoctrination by the schools has placed the male in the role of leader and thinker, and relegated the women to the kitchen. At the college and university level, the discrimination against women has been more obvious and overt. Medical and law schools have discriminated against women in their admittance policies. Graduate programs have not been open to women on the same basis as the male. The universities in general have been notorious for their discriminatory practices regarding employment and salary schedules for women.

If we eliminate the excess rhetorical baggage from the

position of womens' liberation groups, we find a rationale of Myrdal's value conflict. In general, the valuations on the higher plane give great respect to the ideal of equality of the sexes. At the same time, valuations on the lower plane, the inferiority and differences between men and women support a social, economic and political structure that reduce women to second-class citizenry. These lower plane values are maintained by false and opportunistic beliefs. Despite scientific evidence to the contrary, many males cling tenaciously to the belief that women are incapable of performing many tasks because of biological differences. Other false beliefs include the notion that women are by nature more emotional than men, are less rational and dependable. These beliefs function opportunistically and tend to support the lower plane valuations of female inferiority.

The educative process could resolve the value conflict regarding the female role in society. If people are exposed to the real facts concerning women and their capabilities and are advised of the detrimental effects to society from loss of female potential, beliefs could be corrected, lower plane values changed and the value conflict resolved. In this manner, prejudice against the female would be eliminated from our social thought.

Genuine and effective change in education and social thought has been traditionally initiated and invoked through

political pressure. In our society, progressive ideas of men have found expression not so much in the schools, as on the political platform. The schools have been an instrument of social change only insofar as they gradually provided a public ready to accept innovation. The women's liberation movement looks to the school to re-examine values and provide the knowledge to correct false beliefs.

International Education

The power and influence of nations historically has been dependent upon strength in the political realm and in the use of military force. Many still think that the political factor is the decisive factor in international relations. Myrdal forces us to ponder whether in the present situation of the world scene with its intolerable and most dangerous emphasis on exaggerated nationalism (of which politicians are certainly the most efficacious promoters), the impediments to international cooperation could not be better overcome by the silent, patient, and dispassionate work of technicians than by the sabre-rattling of politicians. Hopefully the notion of power, influence, and the use of the military is outdated. The confrontations of civilizations in the future will take place on the battlefields of technology, science, management, education, and the international market.

Myrdal warns that unless special programs are undertaken to correct economic imbalances in the world the differences

between the annual per capita income of the peoples of the world will be farther apart. At the same time, he reminds us that if developing nations managed to match the levels of consumption now current in industrialized countries, it will be physically impossible for the limited resources of the planet to ensure a worth level of life for all men. Myrdal points to the crying urgency for radical economic and social adjustments since world population is expected to rise. Within the next thirty years, two-thirds of the world's population will be inhabitants of non-developed countries. Without redress of the economic imbalances on a world-wide scale, he predicts that we can truly reach a situation in which the majority of mankind will be destined to remain poor in order to permit the North Atlantic peoples to consume and pollute at an unprecedented level.

The formation of world community under world government is needed to eliminate the inequitable distribution of resources and wealth that has allowed the rich nations to dominate and exploit the poor nations. The same reforms that have been operative to overcome poverty within the technologically advanced welfare states must become operative on a world-wide basis to rectify the injustices suffered by the have-not nations. We must, in the words of Myrdal, go beyond the parochial confines of the welfare state to extend participation in general economic welfare to all the peoples of the

world. This can be done only by the regulation of a world economy by a world government that aims at the economic welfare of men everywhere.⁸

Preeminent among the means to achieve the goal of world government, as well as world peace, is a special type of education that provides a citizenry capable of functioning in a global society. One's conception of international education depends in large measure upon the adequacy of one's world view. International education should be included in every curriculum.

The following interpretation of international education is one that is consonant with Myrdal's ideologies. International education is the process by which each person becomes aware of himself and his place in a contemporary social totality. This process by virtue of its nature and aims cannot be confined to any one specific age group nor isolated within any single institution. International education must function to produce peace and prepare for the Third World.

International education requires the view of man as part of the cosmos, a global system comprised of many interacting sub-systems, characterized by a set of interrelated elements. Endemic to the notion of the international view, are the precepts of unity, wholeness, and interdependency.

⁸Gunnar Myrdal, Rich Lands and Poor: The Road to World Prosperity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957).

For a total view of man in his human condition, knowledge of the parts cannot be equated with the understanding of the total world. Therefore, school curricula must be integrated and not left to the caprice of academic specialties.

In order to become effective, international education must make more than a ritual genuflection in the direction of interdependency and must marshal forces in a frontal attack on the nation-state concept. It further aims at understanding cultural pluralism, recognition of reciprocal between duty and right, and the moral imperative that the peoples of the western world have in regard to underdeveloped nations. The peoples of the western world, however, do not have the right to impose their models on the rest of the world.

In summation, international education must be universal, dedicated to world peace, cognizant of the moral imperatives, and concerned with man uniquely and in his totality. The formal study of international education should include foreign policy, cultural pluralism, technology, modernization, and a world view within the various academic disciplines. The direction of international ideas should emanate from the universities and be guided by the policy makers.

Critics of Myrdal's ideology may disagree with the foregoing concept of man and his relationship to the rest of the world, and fault it on the grounds that it is too idealistic and does not admit to the realities of life. In response to this criticism, it could be argued that particularly in light

of the realities of the world situation, this view is not only realistic but very relevant. Man is faced with total annihilation unless he is able to coexist with all his neighbors in peace. Myrdal sees the take-off point in international education in the economic realm because commercial federalism appears to be functioning more successfully than federalism in any other area.

While Myrdal's case for free trade is as compelling as ever, there is a wave of protectionism across America as compelling as ever. Protectionism cheats consumers out of money that they could save by purchasing inexpensive imports. By shielding inefficient industries from the kind of competition that forces them to improve, protectionism works against the best use of a nation's resources. Beyond all that, protectionism, modern as it may seem in its new guise, is incompatible with the deeper reality of a world in which nations have an increasing need to get along with each other economically. Economic interdependency has increased because the world's resources are limited and these resources are not proportioned to a nation on a per capita basis. As national economic expectations rise, of necessity foreign sources and markets must be found. Education will have to serve as a counter force against the inroads of protectionism in America.

As he views the world scene, Myrdal posits the following as realities: (1) the undesirability of the human estate in its

present condition, (2) education as a moral and social necessity, (3) wealth incurs the duty of equitable sharing, (4) man's and subsequently nation's interdependency, (5) education for the future must be international education. Myrdal conceives of education as an on-going continuum requiring a broader awareness of the responsibilities of world citizenship. In America, the responsibilities of world leadership have increased faster than our educational training can meet them. Therefore, those who are responsible for the educative establishment must create an awareness for the need of international education. International education in the America of the seventies will have to counteract the new waves of protectionism and isolationism in the land.

Universities the Power House of Change

Myrdal sees great potential in the university as a purveyor of change because of its function to search for truth. Truth, knowledge, and facts serve as a basis for Myrdal's theories of social change and value conflict reduction. Full freedom is necessary for progress according to Myrdal's philosophy. Therefore, the pursuit of knowledge and the quest for truth must take place within an atmosphere of academic freedom. Ideally, the university professor is, in Myrdal's words, "Free to pursue the truth without anxiously seeking public acclaim

or avoiding public anathema."⁹

Along with its role as seeker of truth, Myrdal includes among the functions of a university the training of social scientists who are needed for practical tasks. "Since science implies criticism," and the "social sciences imply criticism of society," Myrdal articulates concern about the special problem of corruption peculiar to "commercialized social scientists." As professors develop more intimate contact with government programs, obviously their freedom to criticize these programs becomes limited in various ways. Furthermore, it does not seem likely that the social scientist will be too critical of a policy he has helped to shape.

It would appear to be very idealistic to believe, as Myrdal does, that professional pride and tradition will keep "commercialized" social science pure. It would seem more likely that the academic grapevine, which is highly developed, will as Myrdal maintains, act as a kind of social control within the academic community. Myrdal thinks the social scientist should be interested in the development of an ethical code for the social sciences.¹⁰

American higher education in recent years has been subjecting itself to a constant process of self-examination

⁹Gunnar Myrdal, "The Relation between Social Theory and Social Policy," British Journal of Sociology, IV, No. 31 (September, 1953), p. 237.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 237-241.

and critical reappraisal which has produced a steady stream of proposals for change. Myrdal has proposed a shift in the direction of research which would require a radical reorganization of our universities. All his life Myrdal has been a devotee of the interdisciplinary approach in research. In looking back, he finds the results of this type of research lacking meaningful results. He is also concerned with the tendency of interdisciplinary research to isolate the various social sciences and their subdisciplines. Paradoxically, while calling for increased specialization within a field, he advocates what he terms transdisciplinary research among the social scientists. What Myrdal is suggesting is that "at least a few stretch their ambition to master facts and factual relationships out-side their own field. And it must be done without lowering standards of expertise."¹¹ The transdisciplinary approach requires the specialist to go beyond the bounds of his own area of expertise, and become involved in the total aspect of a research problem. Interdisciplinary research is a team approach, with the various specialists pooling their resources. Even if we adopt a transdisciplinary approach to research and education, for practical reasons there will, of course, always remain the necessity for a certain amount of specialization.

¹¹Gunnar Myrdal, "Crises and Cycles in the Development of Economics," Address delivered at the American Economic Association (New Orleans, La., December 28, 1971), pp. 8-9. (Mimeographed.)

The teacher training institutions within our university system are "strategically" important in educational reform. Myrdal defines them as "power plants" that generate moral and intellectual energy among their students to prepare people for a changing society and for development. He places additional responsibilities upon the teacher training institutions in the area of providing teachers with values and methods of resolving value conflicts.

At the apex of Myrdal's blueprint for social reform would be the utilization of the universities as planners, policy makers, and participants in social action. This would, of course, necessitate what Myrdal calls "firmer government control of education and greater financial assistance." It is from within this setting that Myrdal sees the emergence of economists whose function will be to plan society.¹²

Myrdal has urged people to tackle the problems of injustice and inequality with new energy and awakened consciences. Today the claims of justice and progress transcend all frontiers and necessarily involve the whole human race. If education is to be functional, it must, in Myrdal's opinion, alleviate the enclaves of people living in economic, social, and cultural misery.

As an institutional economist, Myrdal is concerned with

¹²Ibid., p. 9.

quality as well as quantity in education. He would favor the current trend in American educational circles towards accountability only if there is a qualitative as well as a quantitative evaluation. A stable and democratic society is impossible without a minimum degree of literacy and knowledge on the part of most citizens. Without widespread acceptance of some common set of values, education is doomed to failure.

Myrdal cautions against emotional prescriptions for utopias. He seeks the solution to international problems in the economic realm, and has a tendency to view education as a panacea in attainment of this goal. International education in Myrdal's schema is persuasion by the use of rational means. There is no room for indoctrination in Myrdal's educational philosophy.

Conclusions

All important cultures are marvelous manifestations of the power of the mind. Western civilization is perhaps more than others the product of rational and synthetic thought. The entire world uses its inventions, its scientific methods, its educational ideals, and its cult of literacy. Other nations have tried to superimpose western ideas upon their own culture, and transform them to the needs of their people. Myrdal, the intellectual man of practical action, embodies the spirit of this culture. The determinants of his

educational prescriptions are exclusively rational considerations.

While Myrdal gives a high priority to education as a factor in social change, one surmises that basically he believes the cause of the advancement of the peoples of the world as being intimately related to economics. The extensive research he carried on for ten years in India and in the other developed countries of South Asia led him to the conclusion that education could play an important role in achieving the social and economic goals he envisioned. These problems, reflecting a lack of education about the rudimentary concerns of life, solidified Myrdal's philosophy that there is inherent in any educative process a need for practical training for life and work.

The aims of education in Myrdal's view should respond to the needs of society. Therefore, the general aims should be both rational and vocational. In addition to academic knowledge, teaching should be oriented to practical life by imparting useful skills. Myrdal is very critical of a curriculum that is unduly academic. He would prescribe a curriculum that includes technical education and vocational training as well as the academic disciplines.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Gunnar Myrdal, iconoclast from Sweden, fought a good fight against bigotry, ignorance, prejudice, stupidity, and provincialism and what is more, he has enjoyed it. From the time of his first major research project, published as An American Dilemma, he has influenced economic and social thought. He will undoubtedly become a figure of pivotal significance in the history of the social sciences. In part this is due to the quality of his mind. Whether writing about economic tradition and reform, prejudice, social change, psychology, education, or anti-intellectualism, he displays not only a sharp intellect, but a bold imagination. Always independent in his thinking, he appears to have received his intellectual impetus by reacting against conventional ideas.

Myrdal holds impeccable credentials as a professor, leader of Sweden's Social Democrats, cabinet officer and high-level servant of the United Nations. His work cannot be ignored. He is neither an ivory tower intellectual nor an impractical idealist. His findings must be taken seriously. Myrdal toiled within the realm of conventional wisdom, and his criticisms are framed in terms of his own assumptions.

However, he never became shackled by the iron chains of dogmatism. He has always been eager for the new idea and endlessly devoted to the concept that challenges the previously accepted one.

In all of Myrdal's writings the reader is conscious of the work of a mastermind of exceptional sweep, range, tenacity, and critical power. In the great humanistic tradition of rationalism, Myrdal places his faith in the assumption that in the social sciences, as in other fields, progress will come as the result of discussion and even controversy. Fired by a vision of freedom and equality, Myrdal sought to awaken the social conscience of the world. Touching at the ideological ferment at the heart of the various theories of the social sciences, Myrdal was in a constant tug-of-war between idealism and realism, between the hope of the golden age yet to come and the practical realities of the existing social order.

In addition to his scholarly achievements, Myrdal is a man of many parts, impassioned humanitarian and internationalist, affectionate husband and father, and kind of advisor and teacher of strangers. His background admirably equips him to bridge the gap between the academician and the policy maker, to temper theory with practice and to offer meaningful suggestions about tomorrow's, as well as today's world. What makes a social scientist great is more than technique, it is moral vision. Gunnar Myrdal has always been a force for good.

The values he has steadfastly held high are human integration and human equality. Myrdal, who shows a touching faith in human nature, in his social blueprint enunciates a need for heart and optimistic energy but above all, a need for a social ethic.

Summary

Myrdal's work is like a mountain from whose sides divergent streams run down and bring fertility to widely separated fields, only to merge again later into a single broad river. In An American Dilemma, Myrdal gives us a complete description and incisive analysis of the cultural paradox provided by the descendants of slaves in an equalitarian society. This work is a masterful diagnosis of American racial discrimination. Some of the effects of this study stem from Myrdal's ethical vision. An American Dilemma set the stage and provided the dialogue for the national debate over race relations which has been going on ever since its publication. In Asian Drama, Myrdal sounded the alarm and gave the battle cry to shake Asians out of their bigotry, corruption, mismanagement, and superstition which has kept them poor. He suggested that education, planning, and sweeping reforms in the school system could ameliorate the condition of the masses not only in South Asia, but in all the underdeveloped countries of the world. In both of these studies, Myrdal drew attention to the many social ills that confront contemporary society. He

established an awareness that helped create a climate of opinion that enabled meaningful action to occur.

The methodology that emerges from Myrdal's work provides a tool of great potential. In his methodological approach, Myrdal stresses the importance of analyzing the relationships among institutions, and between them and their setting. He challenges the position that a value-free or politically neutral social science research is possible. He questions seriously the existence of a "scientific" objectivity and alludes to the many biases that operate against such a contingency.

While Myrdal may not be innovative in his methodological approach, he has synthesized the best of the past and put his own brand on a carefully developed methodology of methodology, a critical theory that criticizes itself. Despite the efforts of social scientists to erect canons for defining a value-free social science, in Myrdal's schema this is not possible. Valuations must be recognized and accounted for in all research. The quest for objective knowledge must be placed within its proper context of assumption, presupposition and value commitment of the men who are the knowers as well as be anchored in the realm of empirical fact. Myrdal concludes after a life time of study that a disinterested social science has never and can never exist.

Myrdal shows in his considerations of social problems

that, at heart, these problems are moral conflicts due to value conflicts and to discrepancy between the higher and lower plane values. He relates these lower plane values to beliefs and elucidates some of the ways that they interact on each other and function opportunistically. It is in the realm of values and beliefs that Myrdal's methodological approach is a prime target for a high skepticism quotient. In his early writings, Myrdal seemed to think that the simple statement of one's values would clarify their relationship to the concepts employed. In his later writings, he no longer believed this, but rather emphasized the need for clarification at each step of the relationship between value commitments and scientific concepts and between research technique and research hypothesis. Despite his pioneer efforts to reshape value-theory in economics, Myrdal records his sense of dissatisfaction in the results. The possibility that it will be through a theory of value that a great advance will be made in the social sciences has not escaped other minds as astute as Myrdal's.

There were two interesting points that emerged from his sociological analysis of attitudes, values and beliefs: first, the emergence of a large body of "myths" of varying degrees of falsity, which served as rationalizations and justifications for the prevailing social attitude and its results; secondly, the frequency with which one and the same

individual or group can manage to materially contradict arguments on the subject. Myrdal calls these myths "beliefs with a purpose," the purpose being in most cases a hidden and unconscious one.

Myrdal is unrelenting in his insistence of the necessity of rational planning towards a better world. Planning for Myrdal becomes a sine qua non for social change. Underlying Myrdal's analysis of the process of social change is the basic assumption that the various parts of any social system are interdependent and that change in one sector or sectors will be followed by changes in other sectors. Myrdal's central claim is that by the very fact that a process starts rolling, it gains additional momentum, and that change in one sector triggers change in other sectors. In Myrdal's schema, social change would have to occur within existing institutions. Since he holds that real social change is determined by transformations in the minds of men, Myrdal relies heavily on education to effect social reforms. He defines the dynamics of social change as the inevitable product of education.

There is no danger to democracy in planning. Rather Myrdal feels that planning will give democracy a wider scope and deeper roots. It is true that planning requires authority to enforce goals and carry out plans. Myrdal sees planning as a function of governments which will result in greater

individual freedom.

As Myrdal waded through the semantic smoke screen of contemporary research on underdeveloped nations, he became convinced that it is a fallacy to impose western models on Asian cultures. While Myrdal realizes that industrialization is crucial for development, he believes that what is really necessary in the underdeveloped countries is national integration. While proponents of the "Third World" advocate negation of the nation-state concept, Myrdal proposes utilizing the principles and policies of national integration in order to achieve international integration. When advocating increased nationalism for underdeveloping countries, Myrdal is not compromising his dedication to internationalism. In his opinion, the underdeveloped countries that are struggling for social unity and economic progress need a heavy dose of nationalism as a stimulant.

Peace in the world can only come from the will of the people to make all governments free. Myrdal knows that the true hope of world peace lies in world government. But as long as might makes right in the world, each nation will jealously guard its sovereignty. While waiting to achieve the improbable dream--world government, Myrdal suggests that the main effort must be to apply moral force to arrest the tendency to abuse sovereign power. Myrdal does not foresee world government as a reality in our times. As he views the international

situation, he is a little pessimistic. He sees the world as bright with promise and pregnant with disaster.

Myrdal's concern for education is explicit and implicit in all his writings. For Myrdal, education is not only a means but possibly the means to social progress. Myrdal indicates that there has to be a moral basis for society. Therefore, we must guard against a manufactured education, unhinged from a moral center, which could be designed to serve almost any demagogue who comes along.

A critical² re-examination of Myrdal's writings invalidates the assumption that he views education as a panacea. He credits the schools with some success but refutes much of the pedagogical folklore that has evolved as part of the educational mystique. He would concur with Perkinson's view that the "schools were not the primary or sole agency of civilization, not the primary sole vocational training agency, and not the primary or sole agency of politicalization."²

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."³ Pre-eminent among the means to achieve the goal of world peace

²Henry J. Perkinson, The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education 1865-1965 (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 219-220.

³From the Preamble to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

is a special type of education that provides a citizenry capable of functioning in a global society. For too long we have molested the minds of our young to serve the cause of the nation-state, and it will be difficult to undo this damage. Therefore, we must provide international education in order to contribute to a peaceful world. Myrdal is in full accord with the aims and objectives of international education.

At the apex of Myrdal's blueprint for social reform would be the utilization of the university as a planner, policy maker, and participant in social action. Myrdal considers vocational training an important ingredient of social and economic progress. He also maintains that adult education is a necessary part of any developmental program. Myrdal deplors the practice in the United States of terminating formal education at an early age. The aims of education in Myrdal's view should respond to the needs of society. Therefore, the general aims of education should be both rational and vocational.

Conclusion

Myrdal's synthesis comes down to a managed economy, in which the vitality and incentives of free enterprise would be firmly directed by government control toward the common good. There is a considerable historical and intellectual background for the idea of channeling the business and

industrial resources of a nation into a more disciplined force, subduing their anarchic tendencies and infusing them with a minimal sense of social responsibility. It is this type of thinking that gives substance to the welfare state.

Myrdal accepts a major ideological innovation of the Enlightenment, the idea of social progress. Simply stated, this is the idea that men could by their own efforts and through the application of reason to human affairs work improvements in their social life. Myrdal, a true son of the Enlightenment, refers to it as the "glorious era." Another Enlightenment heritage evident in Myrdal's thought is that knowledge leads to virtue. Myrdal's ideal life is entirely humanistic, neither buttressed by religion nor motivated by it, nor does it anticipate a still better life beyond as a reward for its attainment. While Myrdal's ideal of the good life appears totally secular, it is still a noble monument.

It is in the field of valuations that Myrdal presents some contradictions. When he speaks of the values on the higher plane, the egalitarian ideals, moral imperatives, and the necessity to preserve life, in reality he is concerned with universals. It is only when he moves into the realm of values on the lower plane that relativism enters the picture. Myrdal denies a priori assumptions based on natural law as "metaphysical nonsense," and yet he accepts values on the higher plane that as universals adhere to the notion of natural law.

Myrdal envisions a free and equal society, and yet he assigns the economist the role of planner. If this group defines itself in terms of privilege and power, there is a danger of elitism. Myrdal's conception of planning is palatable in a democratic society, but requires a type of government role that is going to be increasingly difficult to achieve in America, given today's neo-populism tendencies.

Philosophically Myrdal emerges for the author as a realist, with strong pragmatic overtones. Though on occasion Myrdal has exhibited flashes of idealism, he himself denies that he is an idealist. Certainly he is realistic when he says that researchers are deluding themselves if they think that they can conduct "objective" studies by merely denying their own value orientations. He desires world government but knows that it will not occur in our lifetime. While there are Platonic overtones in his educational theory that are reminiscent of the allegory of the cave, epistemologically Myrdal remains a realist.

As Myrdal views contemporary society, particularly in America, he finds that what is basically wrong with our system is intellectual and moral. We fail to practice what we preach about equality and opportunity, and most of all we fail to educate our citizens to the responsibility of a democratic order. Myrdal does not condemn the system, but

rather finds the impediment to social progress to be man's inconsistent and irrational behavior.

Myrdal's theories, methods, and research provide us with a cogent reminder of the complexities of the human estate. An analysis of Myrdal's lifetime of study and research leaves us with an uncomfortable sense of paradox. In a time when social consciousness is theoretically at an all-time high, man's cynical indifference to--or contempt for--his fellow man is also at its zenith. It could be said that our era is the best of times and the worst of times, a springtime of hope and a winter of discontent.

Recommendations for Additional Research

It is difficult to capture Myrdal's absolute and relentless commitment to his ideals and the many nuances in his writings. The Myrdal phenomenon requires a searching analysis beyond the scope of one individual. Since value theory plays a central role in Myrdal's ideology, it might be well to test Myrdal's hypothesis that it is possible to change values and attitudes through education. Another avenue for fruitful research is the investigation of the methodological framework for the predictive analysis of value change. It would also be interesting to work out a comparative study of theories of social change and their relation to education.

APPENDIX I

Wicksell died before Myrdal had advanced in his graduate studies. However, Wicksell's influence in Sweden took on the form of a personal tradition. Myrdal's Monetary Equilibrium was based on Wicksell's economic theories. Myrdal also credits Cassel's influence on his earlier theoretical work in economics.¹

Myrdal and his wife, Alva, spent a year as Rockefeller Fellows at the end of the twenties. Myrdal was in his "theoretical" stage of economic development, and at the time was highly critical of the so-called "wind of the future"--institutional economics. As Myrdal moved towards problems involving egalitarian reforms, he found the theoretical approach to economics inadequate. Thus as a result of the varied and complex type of problems he dealt with, Myrdal became an institutional economist.²

¹Gunnar Myrdal, Value in Social Theory: A Selection of Essays on Methodology, ed. by Paul Streeten (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), pp. 240-242.

²Gunnar Myrdal, "Crises and Cycles in the Development of Economics," address delivered at the American Economic Association (New Orleans, La., December 28, 1971), pp. 4-5. (Mimeographed.)

APPENDIX II

Summary of Modernization Ideals

RATIONALITY policies must be founded on rational consideration which usually means a break with the past. Implicit in this ideal is the need to apply modern technology in order to increase productivity.

DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT. This flows directly from rationality. Development=improvement of desirable conditions in the social system; planning=search for a rationally coordinated system of policy measures that can bring about development.

RISE OF PRODUCTIVITY generally assumed to be achieved primarily by improved techniques and increased capital in all branches of production.

RISE OF LEVELS OF LIVING interdependency between output per head and levels of living.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALIZATION In India the ideal that social and economic stratification should be changed in order to promote equality in status, wealth, incomes and levels of living is commonly accepted in discussion of the goals for planning.

IMPROVED INSTITUTIONS AND ATTITUDES Among the articulate groups there is unanimous support for changing institutions and attitudes, but in Myrdal's opinion there is also much escapism, particularly in regard to specific issues.

NATIONAL CONSOLIDATION India comes close to this goal in a restricted sense. In a wider sense, the national consolidation as an ideal thus coincides with the ideal of changed attitudes and institutions.

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE This and the modernization ideals are the two pre-conditions for planning.

POLITICAL DEMOCRACY IN A NARROW SENSE Political democracy is not essential though an accepted value in the modernization ideals.

DEMOCRACY AT THE GRASS ROOTS Nehru once observed, "Nobody, not even the greatest autocrat or tyrant can force vast numbers of people to do this or that."

SOCIAL DISCIPLINE versus DEMOCRATIC PLANNING Myrdal and his associates are convinced on the basis of their investigations

that the success of planning for development requires a readiness to place obligations on people in all social strata to a much greater extent than is now done in South Asia.

DERIVED VALUE PREMISE A moral imperative--that everything within practical limits should be done to improve health conditions and prevent premature deaths.¹

¹Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations (New York: Pantheon, 1968), pp. 53-57.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Jeanne Marie O'Toole has been read and approved by three members of the School of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content, form and mechanical accuracy.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 12, 1972
Date

Gerald Lee Hutch
Signature of Adviser