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The British Tradition of Social Administration: Moral Concerns at the Expense of Scientific Rigor

Martin Bulmer

American social science is, tentatively and perhaps belatedly, discovering ethics, particularly in issues surrounding the uses of social science research for policy making. Although the concern may seem novel to many social scientists, in fact the discipline is rediscovering its roots. In Britain the links between ethics and social science were never so completely severed, but were forged in a quite distinctive way, through the creation of the field of Social Administration. The development of Social Administration, with its particular strengths and weaknesses, offers a useful basis for comparing the American and British experience.

Less than a century ago the social sciences in Britain and the United States were directly and explicitly concerned with ethics. American sociologists such as Albion Small and E.A. Ross combined in their teaching scientific analysis and direct ethical prescription.¹ From 1906 sociology at Harvard University was taught in the Department of Social Ethics. In Britain leading figures such as the social philosopher L. T. Hobhouse and the early social investigator Seebohm Rowntree combined scientific concerns with specific ethical and political interests. A recent history of British social science between 1870 and 1914 is titled *Ethics and Society in England*.² To modern eyes several of these figures now seem distinctly quaint, if not anachronistic, throwbacks to the origins of social scientists from the ranks of Protestant ministers. The university professor (mis)using his position to preach prescriptive doctrines, a practice that Max Weber so fiercely attacked, is the prototype.³

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The New Scientific Spirit

These early tendencies were not sustained, and those who advocated a fusion of social science and ethics were eclipsed by those who favored more scientific approaches to social questions. This new conception of social science first and foremost insisted upon the objective, detached, and *scientific* character of the academic study of society, modeled (to some extent at least) upon the natural sciences. Around the end of the First World War new and distinct disciplines (such as sociology, political science, and anthropology), each characterized by particular theories *and* methods, took a shape still recognizable in those disciplines today. Their practitioners concerned themselves with scientific and analytic ends in which moral and prescriptive explorations played little or no part. Indeed, moral concerns were regarded as an intrusion more characteristic of muckrakers, do-gooders, and reformers than appropriate to new disciplines striving for professional status.

In the 1920s the University of Chicago, home of famous "schools" of political science, sociology, and economics, was a leading exponent of these trends. In political science Charles Merriam pointed the subject more in the direction of rigorous and quantitative inquiry, and pressed for a more systematic and expanded study of public administration.⁴ The scientific purpose of the enterprise crystallized at the national level in the Social Science Research Council, set up by Merriam in 1923.⁵ In sociology Robert Park represented the new scientific spirit, advocating the detached, scientific study of social phenomena untrammelled by political or philosophical ends. One of Park's major interests was race relations, which he effectively established as a field of academic study (though there had been one or two precursors, notably W. E. B. Du Bois).⁶ The fierce academic passions that the study of race arouses today—it is enough to mention the Moynihan Report on the black family of 1963; the article by Arthur Jensen on race and IQ in the *Harvard Educational Review* of 1969; and the James Coleman-Thomas Pettigrew exchanges over busing⁷—stand in sharp contrast to the dispassionate and scholarly approach that Park was able to maintain. As Ernest Burgess recalled in a memorial *festschrift*, "Students attracted to the field of race relations, whether white or negro, generally held strong sentiments against racial discrimination and for negro rights. They were predisposed to fight valiantly for them. Park told them flatly that the world was full of crusaders. Their role instead was to be that of the calm, detached scientist who investigates race relations with the same objectivity and detachment with which the zoologist dissects the potato bug."⁸

Despite its academic base, social science was regarded as relevant for policy formulation and the guidance of government. Merriam had been actively involved in city politics for twenty years, nearly being elected mayor in 1911. Park had been secretary to Booker T. Washington, and was the first president

of the Chicago Urban League.⁹ Both encouraged academic studies of a markedly applied kind, relating to policy problems. However, these studies were to be carried out scientifically, within the framework of an academic discipline (whether sociology or political science) with its own body of general ideas and its own developing scientific methods of investigation. William F. Ogburn carried on this tradition when he joined the Chicago department and undertook (together with Wesley Mitchell and Merriam) the work for Herbert Hoover's Commission on *Recent Social Trends*.¹⁰ Here was explicit policy research (a forerunner of the modern social indicators movement, which attempts to measure social change statistically), conceived within a rigorous scientific framework of detachment and objectivity, from which ethical concerns were entirely excluded.

The tendencies begun in the 1920s have been strongly maintained in American social science to the present. The exclusion of value concerns is reflected in methodological principles such as "value-freedom" in sociology; a definition of economics ("positive economics") as the study of means to given ends; and the use of rigorous experimental designs in psychology. It is also revealed in empirical studies of society. In sociology, for example, the scientific social survey has become the dominant methodology and the most widely used technique in policy research, although other types of research design also exist.

Why were philosophical elements so rigorously excluded? The main reasons lie in the conception of social science as science and the drive to professional respectability. Scientists generally believed that moral and ethical judgments introduced a weakness and flabbiness into scholarly work. Western social thought in the twentieth century widely reflected the philosophical distinction between is and ought, fact and value, the positive and the normative. Social scientists, it was argued, should not permit their own judgments about the good society to permeate their work any more than historians, linguists, or classical scholars allowed moral and ethical values to color *their* work. The institution of slavery, for example, might be evil and pernicious; nevertheless the task of the social scientist was to understand it as an economic and social system and to explain why it persisted for so long, rather than to pass judgment upon those who originated and perpetuated it. As a recent survey by Donald Warwick, a social psychologist, has shown, ethics acquired distinctly pejorative overtones in the teaching of some social sciences.¹¹

Accompanying the rise in scientific objectivity was the salience of social science in America and its integration into the policy-making processes of the government. Although the enterprise may not seem so vast to American social scientists, the volume of funding, the size of particular projects, and the number of social scientists involved take a Britisher's breath away. The status of social science policy research in the United States is grounded in its *scientific rigor*. Such respectability as it has—which certainly should not be exaggerated—rests

on methodological competence and sophistication and the ability to produce representative and reliable evidence bearing on relevant policy problems.

Fundamental Questions

Recently, however, some social scientists have argued that the claims to scientific rigor have been oversold, that the discipline cannot deliver the goods that it promises to produce.¹² It is certainly not clear that more social science data have led to greater clarity about policy objectives. One thinks, for example, of David Cohen's account of the effects of educational research on policy in the twenty-five years since the *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation decision.¹³

True, critical voices have been raised before. Throughout the last half-century, some have asked whether academic social scientists were as disinterested as they claimed to be. Writers such as Thorstein Veblen, Karl Mannheim, Robert S. Lynd, Gunnar Myrdal, and C. Wright Mills pointed to the various ways in which social background, material interests, political beliefs, and moral concerns entered into the background assumptions, analytical frameworks, and conclusions of mainstream social science. But their critiques failed to have a major impact until the late 1960s and early 1970s. At this point a variety of developments coalesced.

Social ferment, particularly in universities in the industrial world, led to critical questioning of received theories of social science such as "structural-functionalism" and marginalist economics. Attacks by thinkers as diverse as Charles Taylor, Herbert Marcuse, Barrington Moore, Jr., Alvin Gouldner, and Richard Bernstein evoked support that had formerly been lacking. Greater openness to philosophy began to characterize several social science disciplines. Major ethical and political discussions focused on particular pieces of empirical social science research, from the secret tape recording of the Wichita juries in the 1950s, through the Moynihan Report, the U.S. Army-sponsored research in Chile called Project Camelot in the 1960s, to the covert observations of homosexual encounters described in Laud Humphrey's book *Tearoom Trade* and the Coleman-Pettigrew debate over busing in the 1970s.

In the last fifteen years federal support for social science has increased dramatically, following the enormous increase in federal expenditure on social welfare. New styles of policy research such as social experimentation and evaluation research have tended toward the hard, more scientific, end of the spectrum of social science methodologies. But the growth of such research has also led to penetrating questions about the ends that were being pursued and the alternatives that might be chosen. Even apparently "scientific" enterprises such as the large-scale negative income-tax experiment led to queries about whether the experimenters were not circumscribing the policy options in order to make their

work more acceptable to legislators. The applications of social science to public policy raised philosophical questions more fundamental and more problematic than had hitherto been suspected.

Ethics in the Welfare State

Ethical issues underlying social science policy are now firmly on the agenda for public discussion. British experience seems likely to be relevant here, particularly in its tradition of Social Administration. Why has one particular academic area of study—that of social policy and administration—evolved a markedly different relationship among the social sciences, policy analysis, and the policy-making process, in which ethical concerns figure as central? This discussion is *not* an account of British social science as a whole, or of British sociology or British political science. It focuses on *one* particular field of study in order to examine the relationships between academic social science and public policy.

Social Administration has no precise academic parallel in America. Its nearest equivalent in the United States would be a hypothetical department that embraced applied economists, applied sociologists, political scientists interested in policy analysis, social historians of the state provision of welfare, and social philosophers with interests in citizenship and social justice. To my knowledge, no such department exists. Social Administration's most remarkable feature is its ability to blend analysis with moral concern to produce a subject of practical import.

Social Administration exists in British universities in separate departments of that title distinct from departments of sociology, political science, and economics. Nor is it to be confused with the teaching of social workers, which is a distinct and separate function. It is interdisciplinary, bringing knowledge from different fields to bear on understanding how welfare policies have developed in fields like housing, education, social services, income maintenance, health, race relations, and social deviance. The contributory disciplines include sociology, psychology, political science, economics, philosophy, history and—in a different relationship—statistics.¹⁴ It is an academic, not a professional, subject, though some undergraduates go on to professional courses in social work later.

Social Administration in Britain does not have a monopoly on policy studies. Political scientists study policy-making processes. The field of international relations is of course well developed either on its own or as part of political science. On the domestic front, industrial relations is usually taught in separate departments, and not covered in Social Administration teaching. In a few universities there are special departments of criminology and/or of race relations, but more usually these are part of Social Administration. Though professional

social-work training is separate, teaching and research on *policy* in the personal social services (that is, the delivery of social-work services) *are* part of the field.

There is a close connection between the subject of Social Administration and the development of the British welfare state. The subject focuses on *identifying social needs* and determining the structure of administration necessary to satisfy them. It studies the nature and distribution of social benefits and social costs; the rights and duties of the citizen both as contributor to and consumer of social services; and the three systems of welfare (social, occupational, and fiscal) that constitute collective intervention to meet selected needs. The administrative structure that meets these needs includes state education, social security, the National Health Service, local authority housing (what Americans call public housing), and other directly administered services and transfer payments. Benefits may be provided—needs may be met—either in cash (for example, social security payments) or in kind (for example, free hospital services), but in all cases government and not the economic market is the allocating agent for rights, duties, and collective consumption. The ideal toward which government is striving is “integrated community services, preventive in outlook and of high quality for all citizens in all areas irrespective of means, social class, occupation or ethnic group.”¹⁵

The academic study of Social Administration as a distinct subject originated with the growth of the welfare state. The subject developed in British universities in the period after 1945, when large-scale welfare legislation was being passed. In addition to empirical analysis of its actual workings, there was direct discussion of philosophical issues. Many of the subject’s most distinguished practitioners—Richard Titmuss and Peter Townsend in Britain, Martin rein in America,¹⁶ to name but three—have emphasized the role that positive value choice has played in the direction of their academic research. Many of its British practitioners have either been active members of the Fabian Society—a small, elite intellectual group of social democrats founded by Beatrice and Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw in the 1890s—or have maintained close links with civil servants and politicians in London.¹⁷ Others, coming from a background in economics, have pointed to the operation of market forces in welfare provision and have been less identified with social-democratic politics.

At the academic core of the subject is a concept of “need,” which is philosophical and value-laden in a way that concepts in other subjects (“social system” in sociology, “government” and “power” in political science) are not. It provides a direct link to ethics and an avenue by which ethical criteria may be fed into social science. The importance of this value element has been recognized by leading social scientists such as R. H. Tawney, Gunnar Myrdal, and C. Wright Mills; their writings are widely used in teaching Social Administration students.

“Need” is usually defined with reference to an existing state of affairs and a desired end that is different from the status quo. “To speak of a need is to imply a goal, a measureable deficiency from the goal, and a means of achieving the goal. The goals may be set by some sort of consensus within society, by the person in need (‘felt’ need) or by experts with a knowledge or specific means for achieving particular aims.”¹⁸ In specifying need several different approaches have been followed, including the postulation of ideal norms (“good health”), minimum standards (“freedom from want”), comparative definitions (cross-national comparisons of low-income groups), or “felt” needs (relative deprivation).

Writers in the British tradition have been readier to employ the concept of need than to analyze it deeply. Recently, they have come under attack from fellow-practitioners with backgrounds in economics for indulging in “needology”¹⁹ and for making heavily value-laden statements of the “need” for more and better public services, whether in the health, housing, education, social security, or personal social science fields. Economists such as Alan Williams and A. A. Nevitt urge an approach based on “demand” rather than “need,” or a redefinition of social needs as “demands which have been defined by society as sufficiently important to qualify for social recognition as goods or services which should be met by government interventions.”²⁰ According to this view, if a social need has not been recognized and converted into a public demand, it behooves those who have identified it to change public taste and show that other goods and services should be deferred in order to meet the new demand that this need creates.

This controversy continues, but both sides recognize that the allocation of resources between competing ends in the social field involves choices that are partly a matter of value judgment. Whether postulated as “needs” or “demands,” ethical criteria are relevant in determining how social priorities should be ranked in allocating resources.

Social Choices in Allocating Resources

An excellent example of this approach is provided by the last book of Richard Titmuss, the founder of *Social Administration in Britain* and undoubtedly its greatest figure. Titmuss was professor of Social Administration in the Department of Social Science & Administration at the London School of Economics, the leading department in the subject in Britain. He held that post from 1950 until his death at the age of sixty-five in 1973. Titmuss was a most unusual man, not least because he was appointed to the senior chair in the subject without ever having held a university post. Like Robert Park, who came to sociology late via journalism, Titmuss was then over forty. Unlike Park, who had a Harvard M.A. and German Ph.D., Titmuss had no university degree at

all, and never obtained one (other than honorary degrees). Yet by the time Titmuss died, "he had created a new discipline and was one of the few truly original social scientists of his generation."²¹

The Gift Relationship, published in 1970,²² is a study of the provision, in different societies, of human blood for transfusion. Medical services require a regular and predictable supply of blood; modern medicine requires blood in ever larger quantities. How is that need to be met? To show that different societies meet the different ways, Titmuss developed an eightfold typology along a continuum from the paid donor at one extreme to the voluntary community donor at the other. The paid donor is motivated solely by the promise of cash compensation, the voluntary community donor strictly by the altruistic desire to give to strangers regardless of what he or she gets in return. In between are various arrangements with different degrees of compensation to the donor in cash or kind, or the granting of rights and privileges for the receipt of blood to individuals or groups, in return for individual donations. Titmuss concluded that the differences among, say, Britain, the United States, and Russia could not be attributed simply to administrative and organizational structures of blood supply systems and patterns of medical care services. "Different social and political structures and value systems," he argued, "strongly determine" which type of donation is characteristic of a particular society. "Explanations—and admittedly explanations can never be more than partial—have to be sought in the history, the values and the political ideas of each society."²³

This statement exemplifies a more general principle. Social policy presupposes social choices, which presuppose social values. These values must evolve from widely held attitudes rather than be imposed from above by a power elite. Societies, like individuals, must make choices, and in a democracy these choices must be made collectively. Titmuss says, "Social policy models . . . with all their apparent remoteness from reality, can serve a purpose in providing us with an ideological framework which may stimulate us to ask the significant questions and to expose the significant choices."²⁴

The Gift Relationship considered in detail the ease by which blood is obtained under different systems, its purity, its cost per unit, and its wastage (human blood has a "shelf life" of not more than three weeks). It also examined who the donors were, and why they sold, lent, or gave their blood. This led to a study of the social relationships involved in blood donation, the "quality of life" implied on the one and by response to the market and on the other by giving for the general good. In addition to exploring the connection between different systems of blood provision, the book examined the objectives of social policy, altruism in society, and gift relationships—hence the title. Nor was Titmuss wary of prescription. He demonstrated that the national-collectivist blood transfusion system in Britain was far more efficient than the market systems in other societies (such as the United States) on almost any criterion—

availability, cheapness, purity of blood, economy in its use. (The blood debate goes on, however, with some critics charging that the American market system is not nearly so disastrous or the British voluntary system so rosy as Titmuss claimed.²⁵ Because British donors gave blood entirely on a voluntary basis, with only a cup of tea as their reward, Titmuss linked this finding to a broader philosophical principle, the role of altruism in modern society. Altruism, he argued, is present in many different types of social relationships, including those for social provision. Analytic social sciences—such as economics—that fail to identify such social relations have omitted a main motive power in human existence.

A different field of empirical research, the study of poverty, also exemplifies the fusion of moral and philosophical concerns with empirical inquiry. A long British tradition of poverty studies goes back to Henry Mayhew, Charles Booth, and Seebohm Rowntree. In the recent past several notable inquiries have demonstrated the extent of poverty in contemporary Britain and argued for state action to meet the needs of those living on low incomes. The most notable studies are Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend's *The Poor and the Poorest*²⁶ and Townsend's *Poverty in the United Kingdom*.²⁷ The latter makes a considerable theoretical contribution, as do W. G. Runciman's *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*²⁸ (which incorporates an explicit discussion of John Rawls) and Dorothy Wedderburn's symposium on *Poverty, Inequality and Class Structure*.²⁹ These studies will give the American reader the flavor of British Social Administration. But for those who wish to peruse the wide range of empirical studies in the different specialist fields mentioned earlier, a useful bibliographical guide is available.³⁰

Distinguishing Traits

What follows is an attempt to roughly summarize the more distinctive features of academic Social Administration. Because Titmuss was so central in the development of the subject, his work figures prominently. First, Social Administration is a continuation of a strain in academic social science that sees moral criticism as the legitimate concern of the scholar. Distinguished figures such as Thorstein Veblen, R. H. Tawney, Gunnar Myrdal, John Kenneth Galbraith, and C. Wright Mills, though differing in discipline and orientation, all show a marked philosophical bent in their writing. Similarly, in Social Administration fundamental debate about society's purposes and ways of meeting various conditions and circumstances is recognized as a proper part of academic study. In many areas of social policy, radical choices have to be made between competing social values. The realization that ultimately these decisions are made by the executive arm of government and by politicians does not rule out their academic study. Two notable examples of this type of analysis are

Rawl's work on justice, and Tawney's classic *The Acquisitive Society*. Though more sardonic in tone, some of Veblen's writing might fall into the same class. In the last analysis, Titmuss wrote, human welfare is an ethical concept.

Second, in *Social Administration* one of the most important dimensions of choice is the manner in which certain social needs (health care, for example) are to be met: by the individual or by the government? Through individualism or collectivism? Titmuss was originally a Liberal politically, and his belief in collectivism was not a doctrinaire position but arose out of observation of the "enterprise, efficiency and compassion" with which the British central government after Dunkirk and through the blitz met the need for national mobilization.³¹ He came to believe strongly in services that were provided universally rather than selectively; services free of social discrimination; services that involved the pooling of risks and the sharing of national resources. The English National Health Service, for all its imperfections, exemplified many of these features.

It is important to emphasize that this belief in collectivism was no mere whim or value choice, but an integral part of an intellectual enterprise, closely linked to an analysis of the social consequences of industrialism and urbanism for a complex and highly differentiated society. The theme is not unique—Harold L. Wilensky, C. L. Lebaux,³² and Gaston V. Rimlinger,³³ for example, have developed similar ideas. Such a position contrasts sharply with the individualist tenets of certain other social scientists. A leading economist at the University of Chicago and his wife have recently been extolling in the media the virtues of individualism and of the market as mechanisms for resource allocation. Whether in such popularizations or in his more scholarly work, Milton Friedman is one among many who builds value premises into the propositions from which his theory is constructed. Within *Social Administration* there is lively debate between collectivists and individualists, proponents of the state and of the market, of legislative or voluntary solutions to social welfare provision. Titmuss was a staunch collectivist, but the subject as a whole is no longer collectivist in outlook.

Third, *Social Administration* takes as a central theme a concern with citizenship, developing further the seminal ideas of T. H. Marshall.³⁴ Two important questions to ask of modern industrial societies are: who is a member of the society? and what rights do members have? Foreign migrant labor, which now constitutes 12 percent of West Germany's work force and between 2 and 5 percent of the American work force, poses this sort of issue very sharply.³⁵ Thirty years ago the questions related much more to the position of the working class in Britain and to that of blacks in the United States. An important element in Titmuss's belief in collectivism held that common access to social services was a badge of citizenship, the only way of distributing social rights without discrimination and stigma. Hence this tendency to favor universalism, with

positive discrimination to divert resources to the poor, handicapped, and minority groups.³⁶

Fourth, a further characteristic of Social Administration is its solid empirical base. Titmuss's early work focused on population and public health in the British tradition of "political arithmetic" (the compilation of statistical data about a society, particularly demographic and socio-medical data). His later work retained this meticulous factual documentation, meshed with a broad philosophical perspective.

An American Comparison

This very brief and compressed characterization highlights the distinctiveness of the Social Administration approach, which should be of interest to American social scientists and policy-makers. A comparison of American developments with those taking place elsewhere can throw fresh light on the choices open to American social science policy studies at the present time, particularly given the doubts that are being expressed about their general objectives. What can be learned from a comparison with this British tradition?

In the immediate postwar period, America was still markedly individualistic in its approach to welfare provision, with widespread political hostility to extension of government welfare.³⁷ But since 1965 the proportions of the Gross National Product spent on social welfare have narrowed between the United States and Britain, with the American share rising. An English academic commenting on America has to beware of presenting a caricature of America as it was fifteen to twenty years ago, though in the health policy field the differences are still extremely marked. One explanation for the development of American policy studies, evaluation research, and social experimentation is surely this enormous increase, particularly in federal government expenditure on social welfare. The consequent academic growth in America has been in "hard" or "harder" social sciences of this type. In Britain this has not been the case.

It is a truism to say that "government" does not mean the same thing in Britain and in America. Not only do the political systems of the two countries differ markedly, but (more relevant here) they differ in the respect accorded to academic experts in each society, in the position of the social sciences, and in institutional support for social science. The wide public hearing that social science expertise commands in the United States contrasts with greater skepticism within the smaller, close-knit world of the British political elite. The relative position has been summed up by Oxford political scientist L. J. Sharpe, who compares the British social scientist visiting America to the English chef visiting Paris.³⁸

The connections between Social Administration and Fabian activism are particularly revealing of the close relationship between the academic and political

worlds in England. The Fabian Society embraces Labour politicians, academics, and some civil servants. It is allied loosely to the Labour Party, but distinct from it. Titmuss was a committed Fabian, as are his contemporary successors such as Abel-Smith and Townsend. (To a British observer it is puzzling that Daniel Moynihan may move from advising Richard Nixon to become a Democratic Senator. In Britain such a change of sides would likely be political suicide.) An illuminating recent study by Keith Banting has shown how close the political and academic links can be, and what a marked impact British academic intellectuals had on social policies in relation to poverty, housing, and education during the 1960s.³⁹ Whether such close links with policy makers and "political administrators" are good for the health of the social sciences is another matter.

The role of theory in the social sciences also differs sharply between the two countries. It may be only a slight exaggeration to say that in the British social sciences strong theoretical interests and strong applied interests seem antithetical. British sociology is strong on theory, moderate on empirical research, and notably weak on policy applications. By contrast, Social Administration (which historically and departmentally usually branched off from sociology) is strong on application, moderate on empirical research, and extremely weak on theory. The absence of scientific rigor in Social Administration can be seen as much in the realm of theory as methodology. Many of its practitioners conceive of it less as a science than as humanistic *social science* with strong links to history and philosophy and ethics. It is not distinguished by a coherent body of theory, though it does make use of a set of distinctive concepts that include "need," "welfare," and "citizenship."

As one critic has pointed out, the peculiar blend of empirical data and philosophy thrive at the expense of theory—"too much is prescribed, too little is explained." Robert Pinker suggests that "in British social policy and administration we begin with fact-finding and end in moral rhetoric, still lacking those explanatory theories that might show the process as a whole and reveal the relations of the separate problems to one another."⁴⁰ Here British Social Administration diverges most markedly from American social science and policy studies. Men of the caliber of Merriam and Park gave American social science its cutting edge by insisting first and foremost that social science was *science*—not philosophy, not social reform, not history. Whether this goal has been achieved is highly debatable, but several generations of social scientists have acted to a considerable extent as if it has succeeded.

Britain and America differ significantly, too, in the place of empirical data and the role of research methodology in social science. Although British social policy research (both academic and governmental) is highly empirical, the use made of empirical data is still largely "empiricist" in the correct (and pejorative) sense of that term—that is, based on the view that the facts speak for themselves. Such a view verges on the prescientific, in the sense that a data-

collecting activity like the Census, though providing materials for social science, would not in itself be regarded as social science. Here the differences between Britain and America seem to be greatest. This poses a fascinating question: to what extent is there a trade-off between scientific rigor and ethical commitment? Does one tend to drive out the other? To what extent can philosophical and ethical premises be introduced explicitly into general frameworks in social science without fundamentally changing the nature of those frameworks? The undoubted strengths of British Social Administration are its blend of philosophical concerns, historical sense and specificity, and policy focus. But these are achieved at the expense of formal theory and rigorous methodology as those are usually understood, particularly in the United States. Does the former set of characteristics tend to preclude the latter?

Is it possible to integrate formal theory and rigorous methodology with historical and ethical sensitivity? If some American "policy science" reads like arid scholasticism, which does little to illuminate the real world, some British work on social policy reads like moral rhetoric, resisting systematization and methodologically weak. Excessively scientific policy research is equally unattractive, preoccupied with formalization and methodological rigor, without attention to the moral ends of policy or the historical circumstances in which policy is enacted.

Some middle way is surely possible. The overblown claims of "policy science" need to be firmly resisted, and the belief that the social sciences constitute a new "social engineering" exposed for the self-serving cant that it is. The social sciences should provide a general framework within which social processes can be examined—the "enlightenment" model.⁴¹ They need not provide definite predictions about the direction of social change, nor offer technocratic solutions to discrete problems. But the framework must necessarily take account of the ends of social action, and deal with the moral dimension of human affairs.

On the other hand, American social science has demonstrated over the last sixty years that methodological standards matter, and that empirical inquiry needs to be rigorous, systematic, and located within a proper theoretical framework. In these respects, British Social Administration is singularly inadequate, and could greatly strengthen its theoretical and methodological backbone. If the goal of social science is understanding and explanation, much more attention needs to be paid to the structure of the explanations that are being offered. It is possible, for example, for critics to dismiss *The Gift Relationship* as a flawed and polemical moral tract, and there is a slight element of truth in the charge, despite the illustrative empirical material included in it and the overall conviction of the comparative analysis.

Moral concerns do have a place in social policy research, but this place is not preeminent, as Park and Merriam clearly recognized long ago. If moral

concerns are preeminent, as in certain British social policy writing, then the persuasiveness and influence of the writer is significantly weakened, since his work can be dismissed as mere emotional rhetoric. The answer is not to discard a moral dimension altogether, but to combine it with an adequate theoretical and methodological structure. In this respect, Gunnar Myrdal's magisterial survey of American race relations more than a generation ago, *An American Dilemma*,⁴² remains a model of the fusion between ethics and science that is both compelling and methodologically adequate.

Notes

1. Cf. V. K. Dibble, *The Legacy of Albion Small* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); J. Weinberg, *E. A. Ross and the Sociology of Progressivism* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1972).
2. R. N. Soffer, *Ethics and Society in England: The Revolution in the Social Sciences 1870-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).
3. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, *From Max Weber* (London: Routledge, 1948), pp. 129-56.
4. B. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 155.
5. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, Chapter 7.
6. Cf. D. S. Green and E. D. Driver, *W. E. B. Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
7. Cf. T. F. Pettigrew, "Race, Ethics and the Social Scientist," *Hastings Center Report* 9(October 1979), 15-18.
8. E. W. Burgess, "Social Planning and Race Relations," in J. Masuoka and P. Valien, eds., *Race Relations, Problems and Theories* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 17.
9. F. H. Matthews, *Quest for an American Sociology: Robert E. Park and the Chicago School* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1977).
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