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# Conference of the British Sociological Association, 1953. II

## Opening Address: The Relation Between Social Theory and Social Policy<sup>1</sup>

GUNNAR MYRDAL

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FOR AN economist who like me has compromised himself in the eyes of his colleagues by often wandering off into the realms of other social sciences and also, occasionally, indulging in not only policy but even in politics, it is a particularly gratifying honour to be invited to address this distinguished audience of British sociologists. I was asked to speak about "The Relation between Social Theory and Social Policy" and, because of the accidents of life I have just hinted at, I am more than normally predisposed to find this subject a challenging one. But increasingly, as the date approached and as I began to prepare my paper, I felt dubious whether I would have enough worth-while things to say on such a very broad topic to warrant asking your attention for nearly an hour.

### I. SOME HISTORICAL HINTS

It might be useful to recall at the start that the social sciences have all received their impetus much more from the urge to improve society than from simple curiosity about its working. Social policy has been primary, social theory secondary. This holds true, of course, for the long ages from Aristotle onwards when the social sciences were still merged into the general speculation which we have later come to call moral philosophy. It also holds true for the period of the Enlightenment, when the social sciences made the decisive leap towards their modern development into full-fledged and gradually separated empirical disciplines. Looking closer, one sees that they still remained, and to a considerable extent remain to-day, merely branches of the two dominant philosophies of Enlightenment: Natural Law and Utilitarianism. It is an under-statement to say that at this early stage no clear distinction between

<sup>1</sup> Certain parts of this address as here published were not delivered orally because of time limitations.

theory and policy are observed. In fact, the absence of such a methodological distinction is only a negative characterization of these philosophies: in the former philosophy there is a direct identification of what *is* with what *ought to be* in the concept "natural"; in the latter philosophy an indirect identification is implied in the assumption that "happiness" or "utility" both *is* and *ought to be* the sole rational motive for human action. Social values existed as facts and could be objectively ascertained. Social theory explained reality but, as values were real, at the same time defined rational social policy.

For their subsequent development up to the present day it was of importance that the social sciences were imbued with very radical policy premises. One such premise was that labour has moral superiority as title to property. In its modern form this idea stems from Locke, becomes the basis for Ricardo's theory of real value and is to-day reflected in, for example, lower rates of taxation on "earned income". Another radical premise is the idea that "all men are born equal". Primarily this was understood in the moral sense that all have the same basic duties and rights in society. But in addition there was a strong tendency to believe that all persons were also fairly equal in natural endowments: in capacity to do things and to enjoy happiness. An important corollary to this second premise—which incidentally also agrees, though only approximately, with the first one—is that the attainment of a more equal distribution of income and wealth will enhance "general welfare" in that it will hurt the rich less than it benefits the poor.

A further consequence of these ultra-radical tenets of the philosophies of the Enlightenment and thus of the social sciences as they were beginning to emerge in their modern form, is that they implied the environmental approach. Man could be improved and his lot made happier by changes in the institutions of society which condition him. In a sense, the deepest difference between a radical and a conservative attitude towards social policy springs from a difference in views as to the fundamental cause of the ills of society: whether they are due to "human nature", in which case there is not much to be done about them, or whether they depend on the actual organization of society, which can be reformed. From the environmental point of view the task of social theory is to clarify, by a study of the social facts, how by social policy men and society can be improved.

To the environmental approach the social sciences have, on the whole, stuck tenaciously. Not that "human nature" was ever totally expelled from social theory. Thus, Malthus's doctrine—that, if not checked, the human procreative urge tended to defeat all attempts by social policy to improve the lot of the masses—was in the early part of the last century a powerful conservative argument based on "human nature" and served in the social sciences as an effective offset to their radical policy premises.

In one particular respect the secularist rationalism of the Enlightenment, by placing *homo sapiens* in the natural biological order as an animal, strengthened conservative inclinations. Thus, the biologists' assumption that black men were of inferior "race"—a word, incidentally, not applied to human

beings much earlier than about two hundred years ago—replaced the old argument of the theologians that they were pagans as the principal intellectual defence of slavery. Generally speaking, this new stress on “human nature” was, however, canalized into the natural sciences dealing with man, while the social sciences directed their interests towards human behaviour and social institutions. The clash between the two thought elements which we carry with us from the Enlightenment, is still often apparent when social scientists and natural scientists meet over an issue, be it the psychological characteristics of twins or the nature of homosexuality. As we know, the history of much basic controversy in psychiatry could very appropriately be written in terms of the question as to whether mental illnesses have a purely somatic causation or are also conditioned psychologically and, consequently, socially and whether, therefore, a psychological and social therapy can be effective.

Taking the long view, the environmental approach—and the radical premises—have gradually won out. The assumption of the Enlightenment philosophers that men are, when viewed as groups, equal even in natural endowments, has increasingly been proved to be scientifically correct. The more we have perfected our methods of measuring intelligence and other mental capacities and qualities, the less we have been able to ascertain any innate dissimilarities between groups of people, whether we have distinguished men and women, rich and poor, whites and negroes. Even physical differences between ethnic groups have, when measured more accurately, turned out to be smaller and less socially important than was previously believed. The political importance of this trend in social science is illuminated by the fact that it was violently broken and forced in the contrary direction under the impact of extreme reaction in Nazi Germany.

If the social sciences were thus from the outset endowed with a radical urge towards social policy, this momentum was continuously fed by new impulses. Of sociology in particular, and most clearly in Britain, Scandinavia and America, it can, I believe, be said that its growth was time and time again stimulated by social reform movements. Important surveys of living conditions were in Britain prompted by the growing awareness of grave social problems. Many, perhaps most, social scientists even up to our own time were originally led to the social sciences because of their interest in social reform.

When all this has been said, a number of qualifications are necessary in order to preserve a balanced picture. First, the radical premises were most explicitly spelled out in the period of the Enlightenment and in the first half of the nineteenth century when our social sciences in their modern form had their beginning. But at that time there was actually very little social reform. And the reforms propounded on the practical level of social policy by the social scientists of that period were not very radical, viewed in the light of what has later been accomplished and become accepted as standard. Then and later, the reformers did not usually draw the revolutionary conclusions with respect to the practical problems of the day which their philosophical premises warranted, but preserved these for their more abstract expositions.

True, there were radicals and revolutionaries during the whole development ; but by insisting on social changes which were out of reach politically they placed themselves as doctrinaires outside the main line of social sciences. As scientists the conservatives profited during the whole period from their greater "realism". For their conservative inclinations directed their interests upon society as it actually was and kept them from constructing utopias.

Later, as time went on, the clear-cut radical premises to which I have referred were also apt to become less explicit in the minds of the gradually more specialized social scientists than they had been for the philosophers. Thus, as we know, the psychologists who some forty to fifty years ago first set out to measure intelligence actually assumed that there were considerable innate differences between social groups. And it was to their surprise that their research carried them to conclusions very different from their hypotheses, a development which I therefore consider to be one of the great triumphs of scientific endeavour.

The secular trend has, however, corresponded to the radical momentum originally given to social theory in the era of Enlightenment. Social policy has expanded in scope and influence and, on the whole, with accelerating speed. And in our scientific work we have all the time and in all fields been entitled, while still remaining "realistic", to count on more and bigger induced changes in social institutions. The chief explanation for this trend of social policy is without doubt the increase of productivity and economic resources which has allowed a greater social generosity. But the influence of social theory has, directly and indirectly, acted as a continuous force.

As this historical sketch shows, one of the main problems raised by a consideration of the relation between social theory and social policy is, of course, the general value problem. In the period of Enlightenment and in the beginning of the nineteenth century there was little awareness even of its existence. For according to the philosophies which formed the seed-bed for the social sciences, there were objective values which, like other social facts, could be ascertained by reasoning or by observation and calculation. Rational policy conclusions could be drawn in terms of what was "natural" or, later, of what led to the maximum "general welfare". However, over the last century or so it has become an ambition of social scientists to draw a sharp dividing line between science and politics and to lay stress on the view that, in principle, scientific research cannot arrive at policy inferences. In actual practice no such line was ever observed, nor is it observed to-day. Our whole terminology and all our thought-ways are still saturated with the old value metaphysics of natural law and utilitarianism.

To this fundamental methodological problem of social facts and social values and of how rationally to apply value premises to factual research, I shall return at the end of my lecture. The major part of this paper I want to devote to the sociological and institutional aspects of the relation between theory and policy : the processes in society by which the social sciences have

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been, and are, influencing social policy, and the reactions upon the social sciences of changes in these processes.

We are all aware of the fact that in our generation the role of social theory in the formation of social policy is beginning to change radically. The social sciences are increasingly called upon to develop a social technology, a set of tools for social engineering, as the natural sciences did long ago. This change in the practical importance of the social sciences in society is not of their own making. It is only a reflection, or a considerably lagging concomitant, of a much more fundamental change in society itself.

A main feature of this deeper change is that in recent decades the total volume of state interventions has been growing continuously. At the same time businesses have become bigger ; in so doing they have developed interests which cannot be reduced to terms of the pecuniary interests of their individual members, and their managers have come to realize that their contacts with society must be wider than those merely of buying and selling. Larger and more abstract units of interest organizations—of industries, farmers, workers and consumers—have asserted themselves and taken over social functions. Private relations have increasingly become public or quasi-public relations ; secondary contacts have replaced primary contacts. More and more things are settled for the individual by law, regulation, administration or collective bargaining and agreement.

In our part of the world this development has in the main *not* been the effect of conscious attempts towards planning. The causal order has in our countries, as a matter of plain historical fact, rather been the contrary. It was usually the growing mesh of unco-ordinated public interventions called forth by special interest groups or made necessary by situations of crisis and also the disorganizing effects of the activity of the larger and more powerful interest organizations that called for co-ordination and central planning. This secular trend is prompted by deep-rooted and constant social forces of which technical development is only one. The trend has more recently been pushed on by successive and cumulative waves of violent crises, a course of events which had its beginning with the First World War, and the end of which is not yet in sight. On a deeper level of causation, the development is also related to changes in the attitudes of individuals to society.

I am here not attempting to analyse the involved dynamics of social relations making up this secular trend towards the more closely integrated state.<sup>1</sup> But I want to raise the question : how is the growing volume of public, quasi-public and private intervention and planning, i.e. of social policy in its broadest sense, changing the role of the social sciences in our society ?

## II. THE TRADITIONAL ROLE

Let me start by attempting to characterize the traditional situation as it still was before the First World War. The easiest approach is perhaps to state

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Trend towards Economic Planning*, the Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies, January 1951.

what functions social scientists did not have. To begin with, they were neither the final authors nor the executors of social policy. They did not even train the civil servants. On the Continent, civil servants were usually recruited from among young persons with a university degree in law; in Britain, I understand, studies in mathematics or the dead languages were considered to be a more appropriate educational background for civil servants than social science studies. In all civil services there were, in addition, engineers with a technical training to run the railways and other socialized branches of the national economy and, of course, doctors in the hospitals, officers in the army, teachers in the schools, and clergymen in the church. The people employed by the interest organizations were usually picked from their ordinary memberships. Business had not come to think of seeking advice from social scientists about how to handle their practical problems. Some statisticians were everywhere needed. But neither the state and the municipalities, nor the interest organizations and private businesses felt much need for economists and, naturally, still less need for sociologists, psychologists, political scientists or anthropologists.

The teaching of the social sciences was almost wholly directed towards training the next generation of social scientists who, in their turn, were supposed to hand down their methods and knowledge to a third generation, and so on. As the social sciences for various reasons had, and have, a very small place in the curricula of primary and secondary education, the social scientists did not even have the task incumbent upon most university disciplines of training teachers for the schools, a task which allows for the satisfaction of quantity, at least. The closed cycle of the social sciences revolved almost entirely, generation after generation, within the academic sphere, with a fringe of learned amateurs outside the universities who could afford it as a hobby. Social science studies were not very useful for anything but a university career.

Within this sheltered existence to which the social sciences were confined, they developed rapidly. They usually started from principles and broad theories; economics was, of course, the most successful in developing early an abstract model-explanation in terms of social causation. Facts, however, as they were increasingly observed and taken into account, worked changes in the theories, and so we gradually achieved a more systematic knowledge. None of the social sciences went far into therapy, as did medicine, or into technology, as did the natural sciences; and in the circumstances this is understandable. Social scientists were not called upon to perform practical tasks.

Nevertheless, the social sciences had a very great influence on social policy. My thesis is that, while there was little participation on the part of social scientists in the actual technical preparation of legislation and still less in administering induced social changes, their influence was nevertheless very considerable, and that this influence was due in the main to their exposition and propagation of certain general thoughts and theories.

Malthus's theory of population pressure was in its time one such powerful influence and moulded a whole generation's general attitude towards social policy ; in our time very different general thoughts on the population issue have in a radical way determined social policy in Scandinavia and Britain. Ricardo's thoughts about prices and distribution and about currency, taxation and tariffs, Marx's thoughts about surplus value and the economic determination of history, Darwin's and Spencer's about social evolution and the survival of the fittest and, in our times, Keynes's about how the state by increasing total demand can prevent or mitigate depressions and mass-unemployment, are other such general theories which have strongly influenced the direction of social policy. It is also my considered opinion, reached after careful study, 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.

By stressing the policy importance of the general ideas emerging from the social sciences I do not, of course, want to deprecate penetrating theoretical thinking and the collection and analysis of facts. The progress of science is attained only by hard work. Even general ideas of the type which I have mentioned have often developed and have always been modified as a result of involved thinking and intensive research. But it is only natural that public interest should be focused rather on the general conclusions we reach as the result of our work.

As a matter of fact, the general ideas I referred to, gained much of their social prestige from popular awareness of their cumbersome derivation. It is not as a facetious cynicism but as an observation of an important social phenomenon that I note that, in order to exert influence on society, we must as social scientists not only master the art of writing well and forcefully, and sometimes do so in terms so simple that we can be understood by the general public, but also, at other times, become so involved and intricate that we cannot possibly be followed by others than our peers. To sociologists it is, of course, a commonplace that orderly society is founded upon a lot of inherited magic, some of which is functional, i.e. useful for a purpose. In old times we kept ourselves socially distinguished from ordinary people by the academic dress which is now reserved for solemn occasions only. Our hallmark is learnedness ; it is an essential instrument of our profession ; to exert influence in society we must always merit its popular recognition.

In his first polemic pamphlet Malthus had developed a very simple idea which had been floating around in social discussion for a long time. It was the political circumstances of the epoch, Malthus's emphatic single-mindedness and also, to some extent, the literary qualities of his exposition which made it a hit. After the reverberations, Malthus felt that he needed heavier armour and went into painstaking empirical research. Also, when Ricardo spoke in the House of Commons, where he was an independent member, or elsewhere pro-



nounced himself in general terms on policy issues, his prestige basis was partly some very involved reasoning which became patently demonstrated in his rather inaccessible *Principles*. The *Communist Manifesto* contained in simple terms all the dynamic ideas of Marxist scientific socialism, but it was only the bulky and unwieldy *Das Kapital* which could become a bible for the fateful political doctrine. Again, the policy idea of Keynes to which I referred was not new; it is simple and can very well be developed in a couple of pages: Keynes did it himself on several occasions. It was the mass-unemployment in the thirties which created a receptive climate for the idea; but it was his big volumes and the large outburst of learned literature following his own books which gave it weight. Still another example is provided by the long series of public inquiries and local surveys of conditions of life and work among the poor, which have been carried out in Britain since the first half of the last century and which have been the basis for the development here of empirical sociology: even if their main and very considerable policy importance was the simple one of compelling recognition of inequalities and wrongs in society, it was the amassing of data which gave credence and status.

The writings I have referred to have all been landmarks in the growth of the social sciences. Malthus's thoughts on population were destined to become the basis for the classical economic theory of distribution and economic development, mainly *via* their consequences for land rent and wage theories. Ricardo built this basis and his thoughts dominated economic thinking for half a century and have retained importance until this day. Marx's writings and the century-long discussion they inaugurated have had deep and lasting influence on all the social sciences and particularly on historians', sociologists' and economists' attitudes to social stratification, social development, and business fluctuations. Even if there had never been a political movement inspired by his ideas and, indeed, quite apart from it, he would have his distinguished place in the history of social sciences. In more recent time, the new approach to the economic processes which is associated with the name of Keynes has gradually reshaped our entire economic theory.

At the same time, these elements in the development of the social sciences have all had very important repercussions on public opinion and on social policy, and this is what concerns us here. In one sense of the word this influence of the social sciences on social policy can be called ideological. When addressing themselves to the public, the social scientists have always appealed to people's rationality. The argument has been directed against social superstitions and narrowness in people's points of view. In doing this the social scientists have carried on the most glorious tradition of the Enlightenment.

And as there has never been unanimity among the social scientists, least of all in the realm of those general ideas, what the public has been confronted with has been a continuous discussion—a discussion above opportunist party lines, taking the longer and broader views, performed mostly by persons whose sheltered and, in our countries, distinguished, position as scholars have assured them liberty of thought and expression. This discussion of broad

issues carried on by the independent social scientists has, I believe, a very essential function to fulfil in our type of democracy. To a considerable extent, it has continuously given a voice also to the unpopular ideas. And it has assured a disposition and a momentum for change in people's thinking about society, and prevented "Gleichschaltung" which is such a deadly danger in every state.

This discussion by social scientists could keep its level and exert its wholesome influence on the broad trend of public opinion only to the extent that its performers could actually feel free to pursue the truth without anxiously seeking public acclaim or avoiding popular anathema. Some were men who had an elevated position in society or disposed of independent means which formed the basis for their freedom; in the past the princes or the church gave shelter to others; there were always a few who, having no secure institutional refuge, were prepared to pay the price of voluntary poverty, and even risk persecution, for their freedom to seek the truth and publicly proclaim the results of their intellectual endeavours. As time passed, a protective wall of tolerance was gradually built up around scientific pursuit, which became fortified to the extent that in a few of our most civilized countries the scholar's freedom became an unquestioned and almost unconscious part of our mores. It is a very remarkable thing that modern democracy, building upon an age-old heritage, succeeded so relatively well, notwithstanding local and temporary shortcomings, in preserving, in protecting against its own transitory whimsies, and even in adding new lustre to a social institution, the University, among whose main functions is that of giving livelihood, status and, consequently, independence to scholars and prestige to science.

We shall perceive more clearly the role of the social scientists in democratic society if we realize what a very different sort of institution the elected assembly is as a forum for discussion of social issues. Politicians have only a limited freedom and can, therefore, only to a limited extent be men of ideas. Their specific status is uncertain and temporary in nature. It is derived from the assent of the public, awarded for a limited time; in more recent times they have not been able, as Ricardo did, to buy a safe seat in Parliament, but have had to fight for it.

Politicians' primary aim must always and rightly be power; for if they do not win and retain power all their strivings come to naught. Seeking power demands yielding on ideas. Political action is, furthermore, collective, and for this reason also politicians must, to be successful, make a principle of compromising their opinions. More often than not a political agreement is made possible only by leaving the motivation blurred. The member of a parliament and, even more, of a government must get accustomed to being praised and criticized for collective actions which he has tried, without success, to prevent, and for which he has then to stand, and perhaps to take primary responsibility.

Politicians must develop a relish for living intensively in the present moment and letting its accidental constellation of circumstances dominate their

perspective. They have to watch carefully that they do not elevate themselves more than a tiny inch above the short and narrow view, the popular aggressions, the ingrained prejudices of the public which grants them power. In general, political leadership in a democracy implies keeping oneself at the head of the flock wherever it is drifting. Holding political power often means largely relinquishing any real influence on the course of events.

When we realize these institutional facts conditioning the politicians in a democracy, we should not wonder that so many of them only render a thoughtless reflex of the ripples on the surface of the wide sea of public opinion. Nor should it surprise us that some politicians even become demagogues, recklessly exploiting the aggressions and the prejudices of the multitude for their own personal benefit. The thing to be explained is rather that so many politicians do exert real leadership, that they succeed continuously in taking the longer view without losing power, and that they can strive, not only to give the electorate an articulate voice, but gradually to educate it. This happens more often in a country like Britain where the general level of political culture among the people is high, where the political life is organized by a stable system of parties, corresponding to real differences in long-range ideals and interests, and where in the parliament a tradition of statesmanship has developed over the centuries and become cherished. Ultimately it is based upon the presence of general ideals and a desire for rationality among the public at large. The honest and responsible politician, striving against all the odds of his profession, can contribute greatly to raising the intellectual level of the public upon whose support he depends, and this should not be denied. But the steady pedagogical urge to rationality in political questions must be provided largely by people who have their status independently of the general public and for this reason can afford not to sacrifice long-range influence for immediate power.

Another very important source of rationality in politics is the experts in the civil servants' ranks. Their specific function is to prevent attempts to realize the phantasmal and, in addition, to keep the details of the policies in order. Their realm is not the broad issues or the dynamics of ideas. Indeed, they would destroy their usefulness by failing to hide intellectual originality, should they possess it.

Within their sphere of immediately practical problems, the civil servants in all democratic countries actually exercise an influence on the course of politics very much greater than their formal position as obedient instruments in the political process would suggest and much greater than is commonly realized. They do so, however, mainly by influencing the politicians, not the general public. In theory they should keep mute, and in Britain the theory is observed in practice. In Sweden or America, where it is not observed, their influence on the public is somewhat greater.

But there it can also be seen that when the civil servants transgress the limit of their special competence and occasionally pronounce themselves on the broader issues of our time, they often disclose an astonishing lack of perspective and sometimes a general ideological confusion. Their field is the

details and the routine, not the larger motives for policies, the general relations between social facts or the broad trends of social development which raise basic issues. But the intellectual insufficiencies demonstrated by the expert civil servants, when they enter, by mistake or design, the realm of ideas, are sometimes so extraordinarily large that it must be assumed that they are caused by a combination of, on the one hand, psychic inhibitions acquired in their role as instruments in the political process and, on the other hand, easily understandable inclinations, conscious or not, to put on a protective disguise. For in many cases they are obviously more intelligent than their pronouncements.

It can also be observed that a government expert who persistently expresses himself on the broader issues of our time, and does it with intellectual success, will easily make himself impossible in his proper role. If, for instance, George Kennan is now becoming uncomfortable to his government, it is not because of his mishap among the journalists in Berlin, which could have been forgotten, but because of his significant articles, his brilliant book and his outspoken lectures. It is because he has ideas, expresses them publicly, and does it effectively. He is welcome among the professors.

The journalists are, like the politicians, catering to their public. They are working for a market, employed in the public opinion industry. They cannot afford any large-scale deviations, i.e. not much of independent expression. This is, incidentally, what every journalist will tell you if you sit down with him, though to express it publicly belongs to the taboos of the profession. The risk they run in thinking outside the pattern of popular opinion is that of losing not only their jobs and their livelihood but, more fundamentally, their opportunity to reach the printed column from which springs their social usefulness and their status in society.

The limits on their freedom arise from the disposition of their publishers and public, the institutions under which they work, and these are under the influence of the temper of the time. Under the impact of the cold war, the limits in western countries for the discussion of international questions—and, because of political association, also most internal questions—are thus becoming more and more narrow, even outside the Communist fold where they are also very narrow but differently drawn. The sanctions against straying beyond the limits are, as I said, not only, and for the larger part of the profession, not even mainly, the negative ones of fear of getting into difficulties, but the positive urge to retain an influence on day-to-day affairs.

It is interesting to follow over the years the writings of a high-class columnist such as Walter Lippmann and to watch how skilfully he balances, adjusting, as time passes, his opinion deviations so as not to transgress the bounds of the practical politics of the day in America. As under the impact of the cold war the temper of his compatriots' ire has been rising, the bounds have steadily contracted and his articles have at times become blunted; in fact, it is almost a public wonder and a testimony to his skill and integrity that they are not more blunted and that he preserves his audience. Lippmann would,

like Kennan, be very welcome among the professors. If he stays on as a journalist and accepts the limitations of horizon and intellectual freedom which this deliberate choice implies, he does so in the attempt to exercise some power in the shorter run and within the narrow but certainly not unimportant bounds of actual day-to-day political decisions in his country.

Democracy is a most paradoxical form of government. Our devotion to democracy—to the point of being prepared to die in defending it—should not close our eyes to the fact that, by itself, it does not guarantee a reasonable degree of rationality in the collective decisions of the state. Its course has often been disastrous and may be so to-day. Nor does it guarantee free thinking or the basic civil rights which are its *raison d'être*. I have just pointed to the intellectual sacrifices demanded from its public servants: the politicians, the civil servants, the journalists. When a situation becomes tense, as for instance in inter-racial relations, the conscience pressure upon the private citizen can also be frustrating, even crushing. And, by itself, democracy does not contain the certainty of its own growth or even survival.

In the institutional set-up of modern democracy which I have sketched, a function most important for its survival and growth falls on the social scientists: the long-range intellectual leadership thrusting society forward to overcome primitive impulses and prejudices and to move in the direction of rationality and progress. Our independent status should not be merely a personal pleasantness and distinction; it should be used as a basis for exerting influence over the development of the thinking of the general public which fixes the limits to the freedom of the journalists, awards conditional power to the politicians and allows them to decide upon the policies which set the frame for the craftsmanship of the civil servants. We can speak to the journalists and the politicians; but we have also the opportunity to go over their heads and influence those who ultimately award all the power—the people. It is not only a few books but many books in all lands which have exerted a cumulative influence upon society much larger than any of the contemporary holders of political power. Our kind of power, which I have called influence, is most of the time only feebly related to the politics of the day; but if historical research lifted its eyes above the political constellations and machinations and sought the sources of the ideas out of which social change comes, it would be led to books and their authors.

Whatever new functions the social scientists may in time acquire as the engineers of social policy, it would, therefore, be a most serious loss if they became shy in dealing with the broader issues. The urgent need for continuing stimuli to rationality is revealed by every popular debate in the press, on the platforms or in the parliaments: on capital punishment, flogging, utilization of leisure time, teaching in schools and the orientation of youth, divorce—to choose, within the field of questions central to sociology, only a few revealing examples of the continued presence of public stupidity which come to one's mind when studying a week's newspaper in this not un-civilized country.

It is in international problems, however, where people's opinions are apt

to be least affected by rational knowledge and calm reasoning.<sup>1</sup> Particularly in agitated times such as ours, we can therefore least of all in these questions rely upon the politicians and the journalists to keep their nerves and to talk and act with superior wisdom. Yet the globe is shrinking and our lives are increasingly dependent upon how these international problems are dealt with. The present trend is catastrophic. In these circumstances what is urgently needed is a free, full, frank, calm and penetrating discussion on the highest intellectual level of the diverse causes of international tensions. In the last instance this need can only be met by the independent scholars who can afford the freedom of detachment, serenity and courage.

In my opinion, it is a most unfortunate and potentially enormously dangerous effect of the cold war on the western societies—most apparent in America, least in Britain—that even academic discussion now tends to be hampered by anxious fore-thoughts and clamped in opportunist stereotypes. Loyalty to provoked popular prejudice or the transient policies of a government of a state was never the signum of science ; only loyalty to truth. To this question I will come back.

### III. NEW FUNCTIONS

From the viewpoint of this lecture, a chief characteristic of the new society which is gradually emerging, is the continuous growth in the volume of public, quasi-public and private interventions in social life. A further, and consequent, characteristic is that these interventions—i.e. social policy in its broadest sense—are no longer sporadic but more and more take the form of a continuing activity, steered to influence and to control a social process in a certain direction. Social policy is less and less effected simply by legislative *fiat* ; it is more and more brought about through “ administration ” stretching over time. These changes are making new demands on the social sciences. As I have already stated, they are now required to include annexes of therapy and technology, such as medicine and the natural sciences have long had.

On this point I might be permitted to refer first to economics in order to make my exposition more specific. For two hundred years economists had a very great influence upon economic policy, mainly by means of the general academic discussion whose role and paramount importance I have already commented upon. When the First World War broke out, one immediate effect was to necessitate a whole system of new direct economic controls. Economists were, however, usually not brought in to plan and to handle the controls, nor would they have been very suited to this type of responsibility, trained as they were in the pre-war liberal tradition. Quite apart from the fact that they lacked experience of the practical tasks of constructing and operating economic controls, few of them were interested or ideologically prepared for doing so. Instead, the controls were usually built and managed by civil servants of the traditional kind, rarely with economic training, and by

<sup>1</sup> “ Psychological Impediments to Effective International Cooperation ”, Kurt Lewin Memorial Lecture ; Supplement No. 6 to the *Journal of Social Issues*, New York, 1952.

practical men of all sorts drawn from the world of business, politics, or the legal profession. Nor, at that time, was it yet the vogue for the interest organizations and big business to possess economic research staffs.

It was the Great Depression in the thirties and the need for planning and operating anti-depression measures which really began to draw large numbers of economists into government offices and, with some lag, into the offices of big business and the interest organizations, which felt that for defensive or aggressive purposes they would have to equip themselves as well as the government had done.<sup>1</sup> A new generation of economists who, on the whole, were better conditioned, ideologically and intellectually, for the tasks of planning and controlling also became available at about the same time.

This movement gathered momentum. When the Second World War broke out, bringing with it a considerable increase in the demand for economists to be used in all sorts of practical tasks, the economic officers were at hand and they drew on their colleagues and their assistants from the universities. Economists became accustomed not only to collaborating in drawing up plans for controls but increasingly also to participating in their execution. Meanwhile, in many of our countries, the administrations had gradually changed their principles of recruitment, taking in more young people with a social science background as regular civil servants.

When the war ended, the need for economic controls remained. The old international automatism is gone for ever, and governments find themselves in a situation where they have to carry on a managed economy. They need economists to follow carefully economic developments month after month, to warn of the need for action, to advise on its nature and sometimes to direct its course. These are tasks of economic engineering. Big business and the interest organizations have similar tasks for their economists.

Other social scientists have also been drawn upon for tasks of social technology. Already during the First World War the American army made good use of the psychologists' new testing techniques; and political scientists, historians and geographers were aiding in the political warfare of that period. After the war psychologists and sociologists were increasingly in demand in big business for planning and directing advertising, propaganda and public relations. In America industrial psychology developed into a specialized subject of a great practical importance; so did public opinion and market research. Many social scientists took employment in big business or with organizations; others set up as independent consultants, hiring themselves out for specific jobs. To a considerable extent university institutions, too, adjusted themselves to this commercialization of the social sciences by offering, for a fee, to provide governments, as well as business and private organizations with specialized services.

When the Second World War broke out, there was thus a large body of social scientists trained to deal with problems of applied science and accustomed to co-operate with practical people on practical tasks. Many of them

<sup>1</sup> This change went further before the war in Scandinavia and America than in Britain.

were during the war employed by the military and political authorities on all sorts of problems arising from the war effort or expected to follow in its wake, as indeed were many of those who had stayed on in academic work. This development proceeded farthest in America but was well on its way in other western countries too.

After the Second World War the political control of Japan and the induced social changes in Japanese society during the American occupation were from the beginning steered by the advice of social anthropologists ; on a smaller scale, their British colleagues had even earlier begun to advise on colonial matters. In both Japan and Western Germany the opinion experts have continuously been taking the political pulse of the defeated nations. In both countries a host of economists, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists and educators has been engaged in advising on all the diversified practical problems which the occupation authorities had to tackle. Meanwhile, the demands at home from government agencies, organizations and business have continued to sustain a steadily expanding market for social scientists willing to devote themselves to practical problems.

I believe that we should be careful not to claim for ourselves too much success in these new functions. Even our economic technology is still a very crude art. No experienced economists would pretend that we are doing anything by fumbling in the dark and trying to learn as we proceed. The attempts to re-condition the Japanese and the Germans have had very obvious flaws. But in both cases the cause of the partial failures is not the participation of social scientists in the planning and execution of policy, but, rather the inherent difficulties of the tasks, the limitation of experience, the confusion in the policy goals set and the rapid sequence of changes in the goals. I believe that disappointment with the results reached so far in economic planning and control and in these other social experiments will not deprive the social sciences of their new tasks but rather will raise the demand for more, and more sustained, efforts to improve our technological methods.

The commercialized social research utilized in planning advertising, propaganda and public relations is quite evidently not always carried out with such circumspection and methodological care as to satisfy scientific standards. And when occasionally it is in this sense fully respectable, it often does not meet the practical demand for clear-cut answers and ready advice without much work and cost. I shall have some very critical remarks to make in a few minutes on the application of the methods of social science to psychological warfare. But even with respect to these most questionable technological extensions of the social sciences I retain the belief that we have still seen only the beginning of a development which is bound to continue rapidly.

The common characteristic of the new practical functions I have touched upon so far is that the task is to observe and to analyse actual situations and short- and long-term developments and, on this basis, to plan rationally the immediate policy reactions to events of a government, an interest organization or a business firm. Social development is throwing more long-term policy



functions also upon the social scientists. Economists are engaged by government agencies as well as by local authorities and big business firms to make development plans based on intensive study of natural resources and other pre-conditions of development. Concrete economic planning of this type is bound up with long-term investment policy, and trade policy. All governments in advanced countries are now committed to secure full employment and a rising standard of living and these goals are important in all development plans.

In our type of countries in Western Europe and gradually also in America housing has increasingly become subject to public planning and control. Competent planning in this field must be concerned with how many buildings to build and when, how to build them, where to build them and, sometimes also who should live in them and under what conditions. Housing policy, moreover, has to be fitted into the economic development plans. Houses are a very durable form of capital, so the policy perspective is a long-term one.

Obviously, all the social sciences—from economics and demography to social psychology and psychiatry—become involved in different aspects of the policy problems raised by the increasing responsibility of government for housing. In housing policy there are important questions of standards involved and this is also true of nutrition policy and health policy as they are gradually taking shape, and so medical science and the natural sciences are also becoming applied in social technology. We have not come very far as yet. In fact, not many years ago in all our countries—and often to-day in countries where a rational housing policy has been lagging—national and local housing policies were framed without much consideration even of the prospective family curve and other simple demographic determinants of housing demand.

Even the full employment goal in economic policy does not raise problems for the economists and the statisticians alone. The level of employment is, for instance, tied to migration between localities and countries and mobility on the labour market: Britain's recent sad experiences in attempting to settle some Italians in the coal mines raises important questions which have to be studied by sociologists, social psychologists and psychiatrists. The same is true in considerations of "employable" and "unemployable" workers. As a warning to us of how easily we are swayed by convenient assumptions, we might recall the many learned studies in the thirties which tended to demonstrate that a considerable percentage of the unemployed were "unemployable". Most of the so-called unemployables were nevertheless rapidly absorbed into useful work when labour demand rose in the period of full and over-full employment during and after the war.

A third category of policy functions developing in our generation relates to international co-operation through the inter-governmental organizations which under great difficulties are seeking to survive and perform useful, even necessary work. It is easy for the thoughtless haughtily to deem them futile and, perhaps, to want them liquidated. This is a very large subject: here I will restrict myself to the *obiter dictum* that if we are not engulfed in a third

world war, which is quite possible and which would reduce most of our present endeavours to futility, this type of multi-lateral inter-state organizations are bound increasingly to become the institutional framework for foreign policy and diplomacy ; at the same time social policy is increasingly becoming an international concern and thus part of foreign policy and diplomacy. In a very real sense, these organizations represent the alternative to the chaos of international anarchy. If a major war is avoided, they will, through all difficulties, come gradually to be the organs for an increasing volume of concerted policy actions on the international level. My main reason for this qualified optimism is the very trend of international disintegration. Anarchy is so costly that correspondingly great gains from agreement on concerted action are possible. It is the very irrationality of the present situation which, in time, will engender rational attempts to seek international re-integration—if a general war does not break upon us.

But at present there are large realms of potential social engineering in the international field which, from a social science point of view, are lying fallow and being dealt with only by the limited means of traditional diplomatic methods. There was a resolution at the UNESCO General Conference of 1951 advising that teams of social scientists should be commissioned to investigate on the spot, at an early stage, situations of developing international tension ; the machinery should be set in motion upon formal request by the Economic and Social Council. As yet this resolution has not been acted upon.

Meanwhile considerable international work is going on, particularly in the economic field ; and it is not altogether restricted to studies. One of the most practical attempts is technical assistance to under-developed countries. This activity of international social engineering can be criticized from many points of view. The administration of technical assistance may often be ineffective and unreasonably wasteful and costly ; as a whole, the programme may be badly co-ordinated ; directly and indirectly the responsibility for these shortcomings rests on the governments. And the approach is certainly not founded upon a thorough study of the social implications of applying modern industrial technology to primitive societies or to societies which for a long time have been stagnant at a low level of economic productivity and with frozen social institutions ill-adapted to development.

Probably these beginnings will be deemed dilettante in ten years' time. If so, this itself will, however, only be a reflection of the fact that the problem has been drawn into the realm of the applied social sciences and become the object of sustained and intensive study, with the result that superior advice and direction to this activity could be rendered. The new principle of multi-lateral technical assistance has such an importance that, in spite of everything, our beginnings, even if poor, have already demonstrated revolutionary potentialities.

It is an unfortunate indication of the sorry state of our world to-day that very much less public interest—and, in comparison, only infinitesimal funds—are devoted to the work for international integration and peace than to the

cold war and the preparation for a possible third world war. Social scientists of all kinds are now being called upon to plan the strategy and tactics of psychological warfare. In the cold war and in the preparation for a possible hot war on a world scale there are, of course, many other practical tasks for social scientists besides advising on propaganda.

How the Russians are framing their foreign propaganda, and the extent to which they in a similar way attempt to plan total war by substituting refined scientific methods for old-fashioned common-sense hardened into Marxian dialectics, is difficult to know. In America, however, it is a fact that, as the cold war has mounted and the possibility of a third world war seriously entered into calculations, the social scientists like the natural scientists have been increasingly drawn into war work: directly for the Government and its multifarious political and military agencies or indirectly on "projects" of all sorts, farmed out to the universities and paid for by the Government. A very large number of social scientists in America are now employed, wholly or partly, in this way, and perhaps soon the majority may be so engaged. In other western countries the same trend is noticeable, though it has not proceeded anything like as far as in America.

Of all these variegated activities linked to the cold war and the preparation for a possible third world war, the easiest to observe and form a judgment upon is naturally that of psychological warfare. In America the demand for an intensification of this type of foreign propaganda has for many years been raised from time to time. More recently, in connection with the change of Administration, this popular demand gathered great strength and for some time exaggerated ideas about the potentialities of psychological warfare were prevalent.

My own views on the application of social science methods to psychological warfare are sceptical, but mainly because I am utterly sceptical about the effectiveness of foreign propaganda as it is usually conceived and applied. From all I have observed of foreign propaganda during and after the war I retain the strong impression that in most cases the effects are less than zero, i.e. negative, whenever it transgresses the simple task of honestly spreading news and accurate information, including accurate information about the policy of the government sponsoring the propaganda. I believe this holds true even with respect to propaganda emanating from a totalitarian country. And very definitely, psychological warfare and democracy are uncomfortable bed-mates.

A democratic government, trying to influence foreign nations by a cleverly loaded propaganda is bound to see its efforts defeated by the fact that a democracy is not single-minded. It will never be possible to co-ordinate all the people who act and speak. Not only ordinary people but persons in high position will continuously be talking out of the backs of their heads—from the point of view of the directors of the propaganda—and what they say will have to be hurriedly broadcast around the world to prevent it from being even more effectively utilized by the counter-propaganda. The life of a

democratic country cannot be directed to suit the strategy of propaganda ; in fact, not even its foreign policy can be so adjusted.

And the propaganda itself will in a democracy be criticized by the press and in the parliament. In a time of national fear such as the present one, the safest way for a propaganda agency to get by may then be to make itself agreeable to the more primitive and extreme attitudes in its own country. What then happens to international propaganda is about the following : it easily succeeds in influencing opinion at home which was not its aim, and to stampede it into ever more compact extreme views ; this tends, however, to isolate the nation not only from its enemies but often also from its friends ; it further ties the hands of its own political leaders and deprives them of their opportunities for real leadership by reducing abnormally the number of political alternatives and narrowing irrationally the field of negotiation. On the other hand, meanwhile, the nations to which the propaganda is diverted tend rather to become confirmed in their previous views by the propaganda and the counter-propaganda which it engenders.

The startlingly bad psychology of psychological warfare is itself worthy of serious study. This should, indeed, be the first task of the social scientists hired to participate in it. I have no doubt that the scientists who are engaged in foreign propaganda will become aware of this and that they will sooner or later come to redirect and remodel it with a fuller appreciation of the problems involved.

The planning of hostile propaganda naturally also raises the ethical problem of its direct and ancillary effects as well as that of the values pursued. So does also the work of social scientists assisting various interest organizations and business to manipulate public opinion and to sell products.<sup>1</sup> In fact, all these new functions of applied social sciences are apt to raise emphatically the general value problem. As a problem of logic and scientific methodology I have already referred to it in the introduction and I shall come back to it towards the end of my lecture. But the value problem has certain aspects bearing on personal morality and institutional conditions which I should like to touch upon at this stage.

Let me start by pointing to the fact that the development I have sketched provides us as social scientists with a wider scope for our urge, inherited from the period of Enlightenment, to promote rationality in collective behaviour. Many of us will for shorter or longer periods have a measure of direct influence upon actual social developments. The general direction of this influence is given and determined by the essential character of science and by the ethos of our profession : to make policy more rational by ascertaining relevant facts

<sup>1</sup> " All too often there is a dubious quality about the usually short-run policies implemented by such research. They are mainly method-policies designed to sell goods at the highest possible profit ; to get elected ; to promote a vested interest ; to control quality ; to measure costs ; to explore and control the market ; or to get public support for some ill-defined policy which may be detrimental to public welfare. Research is seldom used to ascertain or influence the long-run effects of the policy on the welfare of the community or even the organization that is sponsoring the programme. This would require intensive value-policy research." Read Bain, " Natural Science and Value Policy ", *Philosophy of Science*, vol. 16, no. 3, July 1949.

and bringing them into their true perspective and by clarifying the causal relations between means and aims. In principle, this holds true irrespective of whether the immediate employer is a government, a group of governments co-operating in an international organization, an interest organization or an individual business firm.

It is true that as we move closer to the helm, the limitations of this influence will be ever more apparent. Policies will hardly ever follow the scientists' prescriptions but will be decided by a political process. Dependent upon where—i.e. at what strategic point—in this process our scientific contribution is applied and, of course, dependent on our skill and luck, our influence towards greater rationality will be greater or smaller. The perfectionist will always be disappointed by what it is possible to achieve in the world of practical affairs. Even reasonable men will often feel frustrated.

In addition there is, however, the question of the fundamental policy values actually pursued in the political process within which the contribution of the social scientist is applied. The methodological recognition of the fact that values are extra-scientific and that it is not possible to determine them by logical procedure, does not free the social scientist from his duty to make them explicit in his reasoning. To this I shall revert when I come to discuss the methodological value problem. The personal value problem arises from the fact that the social scientist's conscience may revolt against the value premise. There is then no other way to keep his personal moral accounts in balance than by availing himself of the only reliable freedom a man engaged in practical affairs has, namely the freedom to leave, which to a competent social scientist should mean nothing worse than his retreat to the university reserve. Again, this holds true whoever is the immediate employer of the practising social scientist, whether a government, a group of governments, an interest organization or a business firm. But, naturally, the problem of conscience question usually tends to become more acute as we descend from the larger units of organized society to special interest groups.

There is one particular value problem which deserves to be mentioned separately. A special interest group—a business firm or an organization—may want to be aided in deceiving the public: in spreading false beliefs, blurring true beliefs and making people's attitudes towards something less rational than they were. Much propaganda and advertising are notoriously of this character. Even a government—which in a democratic state is nothing more respectable than a hierarchical body based on a political party or several co-operating parties—and its various bureaucratic ancillaries might at times want to deceive the people.

Personally I feel that such attempts are always unethical. In other words, I cannot conceive of any aim—and certainly not the simple profit motive—which should be permitted to give it a covering excuse. It violates a central value premise of democracy. In any case, it goes absolutely against all the inner urges of science which are to find truth and spread true knowledge. A social scientist cannot co-operate in such attempts but is, on the contrary,

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under an obligation to expose them publicly whenever he becomes aware of their existence.

The employment to an ever-increasing extent of social scientists in all sorts of practical tasks and, particularly, the coming into existence of a commercialized branch of social science raise, as I see it, the demand for a code of professional ethics for the guidance of social science practitioners. For many generations such rules have been codified for two other groups of practising scientists who make their skills available for remuneration, namely doctors and lawyers. In both cases also—indifferent ways depending upon the varying institutional set-up in different countries—authorities set up and controlled by the profession itself have come into existence to supervise individual practitioners' compliance with the established code of professional ethics. The practice has recently shown a certain tendency to spread to other professions, for instance, to accountants. The fact that practice takes place under such a code has generally been regarded as giving more, and not less, prestige to a profession and securing a greater public trust in its members.

The principle that the duty of a social scientist is to attempt to find truth and spread true knowledge and that he is under no circumstances permitted to co-operate in spreading false beliefs and making people's attitudes less rational corresponds, in my opinion, to the public interest in a democracy, and it should in such a code take the same dominant place as the basic principles of the medical and the legal professions: in the doctors' cases the public interest that ills be cured and life preserved, in the lawyers' case the public interest that every citizen's lawful rights be defended. The fact that in practical life, human beings and society being what they are, the public interest in rationality is not under all conditions such a clear and definite guide as it appears to be, merely implies that the code will have to be worked out in greater detail to take account of the varying circumstances under which the practitioner operates. In this respect this principle is not different from the two principles quoted as basic for the code of professional ethics for doctors and lawyers which also have to be specified considerably in order to become definite.

I venture further to suggest that in the working out of such a code for practising social scientists provision should be made for a rather exhaustive publicity, making it possible for disinterested colleagues to challenge not only the practical conclusions reached but also the methods used and, perhaps most important, the value premises implied. In cases where there are valid reasons for not giving full and immediate publicity to a study, a routine procedure should be laid down by which all the information would be made available to the authority for professional self-control which the enforcement of the code requires. These might all seem very harsh requests, but it is my sincere conviction that they are in the interest of our profession and that a continuance of the present development will make them urgently needed.

I have only one additional point to make. Now that the social sciences are becoming applied to practical problems and that therefore a rapidly grow-

ing profession of practising social scientists, catering to special interests, is becoming established, it is necessary to stress most emphatically the paramount importance of the continued existence and the strengthening of independent university institutions, where the activity of the social scientists employed by the government, the interest organizations and business can be continuously followed and criticized. I should also like to emphasize that what is needed to preserve a healthy atmosphere around our attempts in social technology is not only a persistent and incisive methodological scrutiny but also an uninhibited public discussion on the highest academic level of the broad issues involved.

#### IV. EFFECTS ON SCIENCE

The effects on working conditions in the social sciences of the rising demand from society for our services for practical tasks are bound to be of paramount importance, though they are as yet difficult to discern.

One effect will be to enhance the prestige of our work and our profession. It is true that the hurried and unprepared application of social science methods to practical problems of all sorts will often in the short run lead to disillusionment. Occasionally, there may occur such an accumulation of experiences of deficiencies in our attempts to be of practical service that among a smaller or larger group of people and, perhaps, more generally, the respect for social sciences might for a time drop lower than it was in their pre-practical epoch. But, as I have already stressed, in the present trend of social development it is unlikely that the demand for our aid will not steadily increase. As social scientists we have certainly a definite interest in furnishing from our own ranks the most unsparing criticisms of shortcomings in the attempts to apply our scientific methods to practical problems. One result of our self-criticism will be the gradual realization that we shall have to be awarded time and adequate resources to be able to base our advice on more extensive and penetrating research.

Now that the social sciences are becoming applied to an ever wider range of practical problems new research techniques are being developed. This represents a permanent enrichment of our scientific resources. Without any doubt, many of the scientific advances in recent years have originated in this way. Even the commercialization of certain branches of social sciences has not been entirely sterile. I am thinking, for instance, of opinion and market research, which very definitely would not have developed so rapidly, had there not existed a commercial demand.

More generally, we are learning a lot about our subject matter, which is the social facts. For the opportunity which we are given of being "participating observers" of actual social processes must increase our knowledge and give us new perspectives and constructive ideas. Furthermore, the activity of the interest organizations, the interventions of the state and, in general, the practice of planning and control produce and organize for us huge masses of statistical data for which we could not otherwise hope. The integrated and

planned society of to-day and still more of to-morrow will not only raise the demand for social scientists in engineering functions but will also make the social sciences much better founded upon empirical records of the social processes and will press for more intensive analysis of social relations.

One very wholesome effect of the increasing use of social scientists in practical tasks will be the progressive demolition of the boundaries between the several traditional disciplines. For a generation this has anyhow been the trend of thinking of the best brains among the social scientists. Fewer and fewer of us have written books about the "Concept", the "Principles", the "Scope and Methods", the "Significance" of a particular discipline as distinct from the others. And it has become recognized that the most promising field for research is the "no man's land" between the traditional disciplines. There is one concept which the economist or the sociologist can keep blurred, namely the concept of "economics" or "sociology"; for it can never be premise for a rational inference. In reality, what exist are merely problems to be solved, theoretical or practical; and the rational way of attacking them is to use the methods which are most adequate for solving each particular problem.

The truth of this is most forcibly brought home when increasingly we are asked to handle practical and policy problems which, of course, never organize themselves according to the traditional academic formulæ and disciplines. This is one of the reasons why I expect large-scale scientific progress as a result of the new demands upon the social scientists. Gradually social science will become a unity of assembled knowledge and of scientific methods, as medicine already is.

For practical reasons there will, of course, always remain the necessity for a certain amount of specialization. But there will be a stress on the need for a general social science training at the bottom, the demarcation of the fields of specialization will be kept flexible, and many roads held open for moving from one specialization to another. The demand for the highest expertness in scientific work must always be preserved; but I see no reason why a social scientist should be tied to only one specialty and for his whole life. There has been, and is, much of intellectual inbreeding in our traditional academic disciplines. The confrontation with practical tasks, the co-operation with scientists from other disciplines, and the constant transgressions of the old boundary lines will feed us all with new ideas, make us relate the part to the whole, and fructify scientific thought over the entire field.

The universities will feel great strain in meeting the new demand for social scientists and will for periods be severely hurt by the depletion of their teaching staff. But as social scientists are becoming so increasingly important to society, the universities will undoubtedly in time get the means to maintain academic work in the social sciences and even to increase it. Universities will have the very important functions not only of training the growing army of social scientists needed for practical tasks but also of taking the main responsibility for carrying on research particularly in general and methodological



questions, a responsibility which will tend to be recognized as ever more important the greater our policy functions become. It will remain a problem to find how public and quasi-public research institutions serving the practical needs of the administration and the interest organizations can most effectively be related to the old academic system, and what sort of division of labour and responsibilities should be sought. This is a practical matter of organization which in an environment of general expansion of the demand for and supply of social scientists will gradually be solved between the interested parties by trial and experience.

Many of our best brains will, permanently or for long periods, be taken from purely academic work to perform policy functions. Many will be lost to politics and business. But our basic supply of brains will grow so much larger. At the same time, policy tasks have so many frustrations and disappointments of their own that we shall see a constant stream of seasoned talent returning to the universities. Those returning will bring with them experience and aptitudes which were not so easily at hand when social scientists were mainly restricted to an academic existence.

This all tends to spell out one of the sweetest day-dreams a social scientist could indulge in. Is it perhaps too good to be true? Or are there in this development also other, less favourable changes affecting the conditions under which the social sciences will be preserved and developed? One crucial question arises immediately: whether the increased policy importance of the social sciences may impair the academic freedom which has sheltered their growth up till now. Science is criticism, and social sciences imply criticism of society. The question is whether the integrated state, when once our work has come to have this immediate practical importance for social policy, will be willing to grant us the great freedom which we have hitherto enjoyed and which we need.

It is true, and I shall return to this question, that with all individual variations we shall always—whether we want it or not and whether we know it or remain naïve—be working, as we always have been working, under the impact of the social *ethos* of the culture and the society of which we are a part. A careful sociological and psychological investigation of any social scientist and his work would be able to lay bare how the interests he has pursued and the positions he has taken are the outcome of a causal process. It is, indeed, part of our general intellectual approach to social reality that everything that happens, even within our own minds, has its causes as it has its effects. But this general assumption of determinism has never fettered anybody in his enjoyment of academic freedom. In the peculiar human activity which we call the study of social science the fullest amount of freedom is, we believe, a necessary condition for progress. We need only to consider the products of social science which now and then reach our desks from non-democratic countries to realize how fundamental freedom is for the quality of our work.

One danger in the new situation is, naturally, plain corruption. Such

very great economic interests are often at stake in the questions of policy in which we are becoming active that there might be high pecuniary rewards for a social scientist who was willing to tamper with truth and his conscience. Personally I do not believe that this danger is very great in the countries where social research has always had its centres. Professional pride and tradition are so powerful with us. Our group is a small community of its own and we know each other fairly well. The academic grape-vine is highly developed. The social controls are therefore strong. As a matter of fact, I believe that the number of cases of such plain corruption are negligible in our society. Should somebody slip, his reputation would be ruined, and he would lose that very importance for policy which he was selling.

Commercialized social science raises a special problem to which I have already referred. Insofar as the social science practitioner is himself a high-level scientist and aspires to preserve the respect of the profession he will be equally or more careful than his colleagues at the universities or in government service. He will also be particularly interested in the development of an ethical code for the practitioners.

There are, of course, more subtle forms of corruption or let us rather say adjustment to what is opportune for personal advancement. This has, however, always been the situation. The very fact by itself that social scientists are in greater demand will not necessarily increase the incidence of such irrational influences upon science. Rather, the opposite can well be expected. Since the increased demand stems not only from governments but also from interest groups and since the market for social scientists is becoming international, we can increasingly choose our employers according to our policy predilections. And the universities will, as before, remain a refuge for anyone who wants to withdraw from direct policy responsibilities.

Thus if the present development of western society should imply dangers for the freedom of social scientists, it can scarcely be a result simply of the fact that we are in greater demand and that our work has become of increasingly immediate importance to society. It must be because this development at the same time contains other elements which have dangerous effects. In some circles it is believed that the deeper social changes which at the beginning of this lecture I pointed to as causes of the increased demand for social scientists in policy functions, and particularly the growth of interest organizations and the broadening scope for state intervention, are themselves endangering democracy.

As democracy had a great development during the historical era characterized by economic liberalism, some economists have drawn the conclusion by analogy that the end of the liberal era will also be the end of democracy. Another glib analogy which is utilized is the association, and occasionally even the identification, of "free enterprise society" with "free society". State economic planning is said to take us straight on the road to thralldom. Some of my fellow economists have recently shown such a naïveté concerning

the historical and sociological problems of the social processes involved that there would be ample justification for an attempt to clarify this issue. But again I shall have to restrain myself to a few *obiter dicta*.<sup>1</sup>

I would begin by expressing my agreement that there is a kernel of truth and realism in the fear of what social planning might do to our society. It is my conviction, too, that our culture is approaching a grave crisis and that in this crisis democracy itself is at stake. But the usual analysis of the causes of the crisis is in my opinion superficial and totally faulty.

The causes are not to be sought in the cumulative waves of economic and other emergencies. We can take care of them as they come. Britain stood up to the immense dislocations and disturbances caused by the last war without seeing its democracy falter. It has been standing up to a series of economic emergencies after the war. A new serious depression would hit Britain very hard and necessitate a whole system of policy measures; but no Englishman believes in his heart that it would endanger democracy.

Nor are the causes the secular trend towards a growing volume of state interventions and social planning and the increasing strength and importance of civic and economic interest organizations. These developments have rather the very opposite effect of making organized society increasingly concerned with the welfare of all the citizens and of calling for an ever wider participation of everybody in the responsibility for society, thereby giving democratic government deeper roots and wider scope.

The danger for democracy stems, in fact, not from causes working from within our society, from factors endogenous to our culture and our politics. The causes spring from the cold war or, rather, from the methods we are choosing to meet the revolutionary challenge of our time; they express themselves in fear and ideological confusions.

And so much is true: if western society should be scared into gradually giving up the basic tenets of democracy, if it should retreat into adopting totalitarian methods, then, of course, the increase of controls and planning, and the availability of social scientists able and willing to handle them, would enhance the effectiveness of this retreat from democracy.

In the social sciences this danger is already visible in the disloyalty-phobia, so strange and, indeed, perverse when viewed in the light of our great tradition. As our nations feel themselves in danger, subjective and social pressures develop for loyalty to the state. This development, if not combated, will of course emasculate science which, I repeat, can recognize no other loyalty than to truth. The very essence of totalitarianism is, in the field of ideas, the preposterous claim by a state to set bounds to what it is permissible to think and to teach.

The present state of public hysteria becomes the more dangerous for the social sciences as there are, undoubtedly, certain long-range effects of their changing role in society to make the social scientists more pliable to social

<sup>1</sup> *The Trend towards Economic Planning*, the Manchester School of Economics and Social Studies, January 1951, pp. 40-2.

pressure and more reluctant to participate in the general policy debate, which is so important to democracy.

To begin with, it is very natural for social scientists to feel less of an urge to express themselves on the broader issues nowadays when increasingly they are finding themselves in a situation where they are given an opportunity to assist in planning and effectuating actual social policy. The availability of much more detailed factual data will at the same time encourage them to move on a lower level of generality and to refrain from the broad synoptical view which is necessary in discussions of major alternatives in social policy.

Another line of long-range effects stems from the very fact that social scientists are given policy responsibilities. Insofar as they become regular civil servants, they come, of course, under the same obligations as other civil servants: to accept the policy valuations as determined by the political process, to work out the technical implications, and to keep silent. Very much the same rules easily come to apply to those who are from time to time more temporarily drawn upon for policy responsibilities. If they wish to be consulted in the future, they may feel it advantageous to remain reticent even during their academic interludes. This actually amounts to saying that not only social scientists who are actually used for policy tasks but all candidates for such assignments are becoming tempted to caution in dealing with policy issues and to seek to win their merits in less dangerous scientific endeavours.

When, furthermore, as at present in America, the government and its various political and military agencies become interested in a rapidly enlarging range of social science fields and start to sponsor and finance "projects" of all sorts in the universities, one certain effect is a growing tendency to secretiveness, motivated by real or alleged security reasons. From the government's point of view it is often felt appropriate to keep secret even the fact that it is interested in a particular problem. And already the normal tradition of bureaucracy to protect as many of their brain-products as possible from public criticism by stamping them "classified", must work in this direction.

From what little an outsider can know of this proliferation of government projects in social science, made possible by all the public money which now like a Jovian gold rain is descending upon the universities, one gathers an impression that common knowledge about many of these "projects" and about the fact that they are kept secret would invite public amusement. But from the point of view of science this matter is really not amusing at all. If this practice should continue, if the academic institutions should acquire a vested interest in its continuance, if a growing number of young social scientists should become dependent on it for their livelihood and their advancement, one of the most important traditions of our old craft could easily be broken, namely that we produce for publication and for public scrutiny.

All these tendencies converge into the common resultant that social scientists are coming to tend to abstain from carrying on the academic public discussion of the broad policy issues. The social scientists are either employed

by the government in such responsibilities that they have neither the right nor the time and interest for this task ; or they do not want to prejudice their acceptability for such assignments in the future. Those who work for big business and the organizations in the commercialized sections of applied social sciences will also often feel it advantageous not to get into too deep water. The special interests who employ and pay them, will usually want to have results published that are favourable to them ; but, apart from this, they will want to see their scientists remain so far as possible uncommitted and uncompromised.

And for the social scientists who continue independent work within the universities, there are boundless opportunities to make respectable contributions to science without becoming involved in the broader issues. There is a tendency, visible to any reflecting reader of our learned journals, that more and more effort is devoted to less and less important problems. To my present audience I should not conceal my impression that this is particularly evident in sociological journals. This is not simply a result of the increase of the total labour force in the social sciences. The fact is that less and less labour is being applied to major problems. Certain critical problems are entirely bypassed ; it so happens that many of them are " hot cargo " in the present political situation.

If I am right in assigning a capital importance for our democracy to the continuation of a rich, full, and free academic discussion of broad policy issues, it inevitably follows that the present trend towards the use of social scientists for policy tasks raises a serious problem and involves a grave danger because of the effects I have just hinted at. The solution of this problem must be sought in creating incentives for a considerable number of social scientists to stay aloof, for life or for large parts of their lives, from direct participation in practical tasks. It will require a strengthening of the universities in their power to compete for brains. This would be highly desirable for another reason too : as a means of assuring a balanced growth of the social sciences and a training ground of the highest fertility for all the other social scientists, destined to go out into practical fields.

Under the impact of our growing cultural crisis, both the need for a high-level discussion of the broader issues and the difficulties in finding those who will take part in it have grown immensely. As the impact of the cold war is closing down upon us, so many issues, and not only the international ones, become inopportune to the weak-hearted. If the cold war should last for a long time, our very status, which is the basis for our freedom and therefore also for our influence, may be at stake, not only in America but also here in our old world where the social sciences were born and reared.

I have no other advice to give than that we should now demonstrate the courage which is part of our great tradition. I realize fully that this advice is hard when directed to our young disciples, who do not have the inner security of age and recognized accomplishments and who have before them a long life to live and a career to establish. This is also the reason why

I should feel most pessimistic about the future of free social sciences if the cold war should be for a long time the condition of western civilization. The sequence of generations would then most probably imply a cumulative deterioration of status and freedom for the social scientists. But to the older generation, who have experienced the tradition and who represent it, and who usually have also so much less to risk because of their position and their shorter life perspective, the advice becomes a moral imperative that they should now stand up and be counted.

#### V. THE VALUE PROBLEM

This brings me to the last section of my lecture, where I should like to make some observations on the general value problem. I have stressed that the increasing role of social scientists in social policy and the drive to transform social sciences into social technology emphasize dramatically the reality and the importance of this problem. I have expressed my views on certain aspects of the problem which relate to personal morality and institutional conditions. I have left the logical and methodological value problem to be treated here at the end of my lecture. There can be no question of an exhaustive treatment in the few minutes I have still left at my disposal.<sup>1</sup> I will attempt only to draw the very broadest outline of my position.

I have mentioned that for more than a century most social scientists have agreed that a sharp distinction must be drawn between what *is* and *what ought to be*. Science is concerned only with establishing the facts and the causal relations between facts. On this basis valid prognosis can be made about the future development which is probable under given assumptions. If we are faced with the task of advising on policy, a value premise has to be chosen and inserted. This value premise is extra-scientific; it does not emerge out of the analysis itself. When the value premise is chosen and defined, it will, in combination with the analysis of the facts, permit rational policy conclusions. These conclusions are rational because they are in this sense hypothetical. They only spell out the logical policy implications of the selected value premise in a known reality context.

This familiar view, which I shall take as the starting point in my brief exposition of the value problem, is often expressed thus: though it is not possible for science to pronounce on the *ends* of social policy, it is a scientific problem which can be scientifically solved to establish what *means* are most appropriate for reaching an end which is postulated. This way of reasoning presumes that the means are not themselves objects for human valuation, except indirectly for their efficiency as instruments in achieving an end. This, incidentally, should be recognized as a reminiscence of a very central thesis of Utilitarianism. To this moral philosophy it was a basic principle that nothing was good or bad in itself but only because of its good or bad

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *An American Dilemma. The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, New York, 1944, chap. 1 and Appendices 1-3; also the Preface to the English edition of *The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory*, London, 1953.

effects (and the effects were judged according to their relevance for increasing or decreasing the total sum of "happiness" in society or the "general welfare" which was the end of all ends). We may also recall in passing that this thesis was one of the main objects of the Intuitionists' attack on utilitarian philosophy and was also a reason why economics in particular brought upon its head censure for being "the dismal science".

But leaving all these old doctrinal quarrels aside, it is simply not true that only ends are the object of valuations and that means are valued only as instrumental to ends. In any human valuation means have, in addition to their instrumental value, independent values as well. The value premise which has to be introduced in order to allow policy conclusions to be reached from factual analysis has therefore to be a valuation of means as well as ends.

Furthermore, in reality, of course, a desired end, if reached, is never attained in purity. The dynamic social process initiated by the means results in many other changes besides the positive achievement of the end. These accessory effects of the means have also to be taken into account in the chosen value premise.

This all makes the matter of introducing a value premise in social research considerably more complicated than is usually recognized. It implies, in effect, that the extra-scientific value premise needed for reaching policy conclusions from scientific research must contain valuations of every single element in the great number of different processes of future development which, as possibilities corresponding to various modifications of policy, ramify from a given situation assumed to be ascertained and analysed with respect to these possibilities.

Now, the secret of all science is the principle of generalization. But in this case generalizations do not only make things simpler. It is true that by courageous use of our scientific intuition we can manage to exclude a number of policies as unfeasible or in some other sense unrealistic. We can also invent certain instrumental common denominators for measuring—in terms of aggregates, averages, and indices of all sorts—the various characteristics of ends, means, and accessory effects in such a way as to make the value premise simpler and easier to formulate. (Now, these and other similar tricks of our craft imply that our research is given direction; I will return to this problem in a moment.) But at the same time a generalizing analysis will also make the needed value premise more complicated and difficult to formulate and handle. For such an analysis is not being related only to one concrete initial situation; it will aspire to a much more general judgment on the policies, corresponding to the postulated value premise, appropriate to different initial situations.

Finally, even if the value premise is now openly assumed to be extra-scientific, deliberately chosen, and made explicit—which is the great advance in method compared with the old practice, where the valuation was most of the time kept implicit and often made to emerge out of the analysis itself—the value premise cannot be arbitrarily chosen. It must be relevant, even

significant, and it must be practicable. This means that it must correspond to the real valuations of existing groups in society, large enough or for other reasons having power enough to make it realistic. An author's beliefs about reality are of interest and importance if they are founded upon good analysis of factual data; as we are not poets, our own valuations of reality are not important and interesting if they are extravagant in relation to the society where we live.

In most situations there are, furthermore, not one but several sets of relevant and significant valuations. Therefore, if the policy analysis of a practical social problem is not to be one-sided and therefore inadequate, the analysis will have to be worked out with several sets of co-existing value premises.

To be founded in reality, in the sense of not being arbitrary, the value premises should not be taken out of the air by intelligent guess work but be the result of careful empirical opinion studies—of a perfected type which does not yet exist—concerning the “true” attitudes of the different social groups. Particular difficulties in utilizing even the most perfected opinion studies for constructing the sets of co-existing value premises needed for the practical application of social analysis are: first, that the valuations should, so far as possible, be “rational”, in the sense that they represent the valuations people would have if they had a better knowledge about reality; second, that they must be valuations not only of the elements in the present situation but also of elements in all the possible future developments.

And yet I have not touched upon the greatest difficulty of all in this type of practical analysis, the difficulty Immanuel Kant struggled with in his criticism of metaphysics. It concerns a problem already hinted at from one particular aspect: the direction of research. Up till now I have assumed that, before we came to the problem of practical application by introducing a value premise, we had already carried out a purely factual analysis which was independent of any valuations. This assumption is naïve empiricism: the idea that if we observe, and continue to observe, reality without any preconceptions, the facts will somehow start to organize themselves into a system which is assumed to pre-exist. But without questions there are no answers. And the answers are preconceived in the formulation of the questions. The questions express our interests in the matter. The interests can never be purely scientific. They are choices, the products of our valuations. “Without valuations we have no interest, no sense of relevance or of significance and, consequently, no object”, my late friend Louis Wirth once wrote to me when we corresponded about this problem. This is, indeed, the principal paradox of science: the value premise, as I pointed out, cannot even be formulated except in relation to all elements in all the alternatively possible development processes laid bare by factual analysis: the factual analysis cannot be carried out except when guided by the value premise.

This concentrated analysis of the logical relation between social theory and social policy, will make understandable why I must now confess that I



have not read any major work, nor written any myself, which fully satisfies me as really meeting the demands of how properly to deal with facts and valuations in social science. But this situation where we all fall short of the ideal provides no reason why we should not continuously strive to approach it by perfecting our working methods. Anyhow, the old hedonistic and utilitarian method does not offer a substitute in any real sense. For it cannot be seriously suggested that we should continue to conceal our introduction of valuations into our research by forced interpretations of empty formulæ, i.e. actually by logical errors. These defects are inherent in the old metaphysical method and its basic philosophy; they cannot be eradicated by any econometric rejuvenation.

Let me try in one paragraph to formulate the main rules we should attempt to apply to social analysis. Value premises should be introduced openly. They should be explicitly stated and not kept hidden as tacit assumptions. They should be used not only as premises for our policy conclusions but also to determine the direction of our positive research. They should thus be kept conscious and in the focus of attention throughout the work. This is, incidentally, our only protection against bias in research, for bias implies being directed by unacknowledged valuations. The value premises should be formulated as specifically and concretely as possible. They cannot be *a priori* self-evident or generally valid. They should be chosen, but not arbitrarily, for the choice must meet the criteria of relevance and significance to the actual society we are living in. Since as a matter of fact conflicting valuations are held in society, the value premises should ideally be given as a number of sets of co-existing valuations.

If we know the actual power co-efficients of the different value premises—dependent, among other factors, upon the weight of the groups which hold the corresponding valuations—and if the value premises are really worked into our analysis as they should, we should be able to present as the result of our research what I have once called an abstract “war game”, a sociological equivalent of the drawing-board strategy before the battle. We should be able to form opinions both about the policies different groups should rationally attempt to pursue in social policy (taking into account their own valuations and all other pertinent facts in society) and about the probable outcome of the social process (taking into account also the power co-efficients). Programmes and prognoses may in this way be logically correlated, because the programmes are founded upon estimates of what would happen (under different policies) and prognoses take into account the effect of the different policies employed in the programmes.

There are two sets of difficulties we shall meet in any attempts to realize this method in social research. We have first the difficulties originating from the fact that our knowledge about actual value preferences in society falls far short of our knowledge about the other data which we are accustomed to deal with in social research. This implies, in turn, that our hopes for future advance in social research depend upon progress in studies which could

aid us in learning more about the content and processes of social valuations and their political expression. This calls for a very much modernized political science which has learned to utilize an improved and fully relativistic sociology and social psychology, not as formerly an absolutistic moral philosophy based on a hedonistic, i.e. rationalist and individual, psychology.

The other set of difficulties are of a more technical, not to say mechanical character. To deal properly with a value premise is, as I have pointed out, a very complicated procedure, and it becomes particularly complicated when we operate with the number of co-existing valuations that is needed for objectivity. We cannot assume a convergence of interest. We stand continuously before research tasks where a clash of interests and valuations is part of the problem. Nor, of course, can the institutional frame be treated as a constant, except in short-range problems. Changing this frame is regularly the long-range object of policies.

Permit me finally to stress again one main point. Quite apart from drawing any policy conclusions from social research or forming any ideas about what is desirable or undesirable, we employ and we need value premises in making scientific observations of facts and in analysing their causal interrelation. Chaos does not organize itself into any cosmos. 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. We can strive to make our thinking rational in spite of this, but only by facing the valuations, not by evading them.

For about a century the historical and institutional criticism of abstract theorizing—of, for instance, economic theory in the classical tradition—have, of course, made this point that social theory was conditioned by its material and cultural setting. But as the critics were either deeply engulfed in metaphysical thinking themselves—though of a different kind: usually organic and juridical—or else just naïvely empirical like the social theorists they criticized, they never developed a clear methodology from their criticism. The thesis that social science like every other branch of human endeavour is, as a matter of fact, conditioned by the valuations prevalent in society which form its cultural environment was, however, developed into a sociology of science by two great German social scientists, Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. It is for social science itself to draw the rational consequences of this insight for its methods of observation and analysis. The most important thing is to make this unavoidable conditioning a conscious and deliberate situation, to change an uncontrolled general bias into a set of explicit and specific viewpoints.