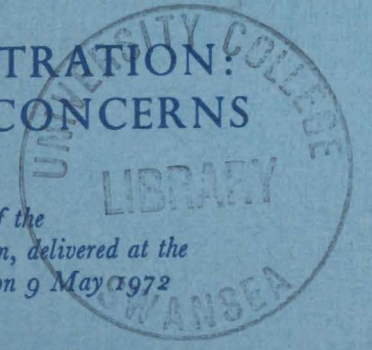


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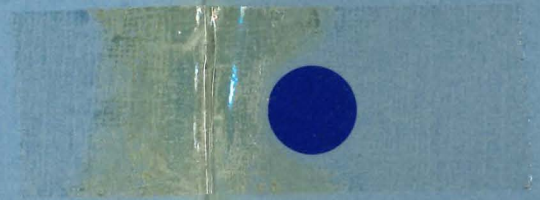
# SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION: SOME CURRENT CONCERNS

*Inaugural Lecture of the  
Professor of Social Administration, delivered at the  
University College of Swansea on 9 May 1972*



by  
PROFESSOR MAURICE BROADY, B.A.

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## SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION : SOME CURRENT CONCERNS

To be elevated to the dignity of an academic chair is to be given access to a very wide sphere of discretion. But whether a professor will use his discretion for good or for ill cannot easily be predicted. His contract defines his duties in one sentence ; and though his role is more fully delineated by academic convention, it still only states the context within which that discretion will be exercised. Indeed, in the interpretation of their roles, professors range from the Socratic to the Machiavellian. There are also to be found, in this curious Toytown world of the senior common rooms of our universities, the irascible Professor Brainstorms, the dozy Professor Deadwoods, even occasionally those who model themselves upon 'The Prof' himself, enigmatic and malign: each exercising his discretion in his own distinctive way. A new professor, accordingly, is as much a risk as he is an asset, a risk which the College prudently seeks to minimise by diligently scrutinizing his credentials and carefully listening to the academic grapevine. But alas, with its new professor no less than with its newest student, it is still taking a gamble, still buying for itself a pig in a poke. An inaugural lecture, therefore, offers the College an opportunity of assessing the risk at first hand by inviting the new man, even five terms after he has taken the soldier's shilling, to indicate some of the concerns which will inform the discretion to which he has newly been admitted.

Even a professor's discretion, however, is not unlimited. It has to find expression within an existing framework of academic activity. In coming to Swansea, I inherit a department which has pioneered in the study of social administration in the University of Wales and which has built up a significant record of teaching and research within the College. For its establishment, and especially for the development of courses for students from the Third World for which we are particularly renowned, we are indebted to the vision of Principal Fulton and Robin Huws Jones, who was our first director of studies. Since 1961, when Mr. Huws Jones left to become the first director of the





National Institute of Social Work Training, the department has been led with devotion and tenacity by Andrew Lochhead. Under his chairmanship, it has grown steadily in numbers and esteem and new courses in social policy for senior overseas administrators and for students working for the B.Sc. (Econ.) degree have been successfully introduced. It is Mr. Lochhead's very effective leadership and his selfless regard for the welfare of the department over these last ten years that I should wish to acknowledge with the warmest appreciation this evening.

As a field of academic teaching and research, social administration was first recognised in my old department in the University of Liverpool in 1903. It struck a second root in the Department of Social Science at the London School of Economics ten years later. These schools expressed the concern for social reform and the tradition of empirical social research that had inspired Charles Booth and Sydney and Beatrice Webb. In this context, social administration had to do not with the general theory of society—that was the domain of sociology proper—but with the contemporary problem of poverty, which arose in a society undergoing rapid economic and social change, with a governmental structure ill-adapted to meet the adversities of urbanization that ensued and hamstrung by a doctrine of *laissez-faire* which regarded state intervention as an improper and dangerous impediment to the free operation of a competitive market. The term 'social' in this period contained an implicit reference to the class system. 'Social work', for example, was social only in the sense that it was charitable work done by members of Society with a capital 'S' among members of society with a small one. It probably had something of the euphemistic connotation that was conveyed in the contemporary term 'social evil', by which was meant prostitution. But if social administration expressed in some degree the condescension and moralism of the Lady Bountifuls and the Charity Organisation Society, it also embodied a fine tradition of empirical inquiry into social problems that was rooted in the work of Sir Edwin Chadwick, Sir John Simon and others in the nineteenth century and

which, by challenging the dogmatism of political economy, sought to have a direct influence upon legislation and social policy.

The traditional justification of social administration departments, however, has been the training of social workers; their style has been a combination of what Robert Pinker has so neatly described as 'fact-finding and moral rhetoric'. But the rapid development of the social services after 1945, which has recently culminated in the Social Services Act of 1970, has changed the nature of social administration and enjoined corresponding changes in academic research and teaching in this field. In his inaugural lecture in 1961, Professor Donnison made the point that the social services could no longer be regarded as 'an unproductive frill tacked on to the economy as a charitable afterthought'. They were, on the contrary, 'an integral and . . . a necessary part of our economic and social system—a form of collective provision required to meet the needs of an expanding industrial society and to provide a market for its products'. Major social and economic changes always throw open new fields of academic inquiry. Social sciences like economics and sociology began as, and continue to be attempts to fashion new theories better adapted to comprehend the changing conditions of industrial society. So it is hardly surprising that, as social welfare services have come to occupy such a distinctive and significant place in contemporary societies, they should also come to command the attention of specialist groups of academic teachers and researchers. It is also to be expected that one of their major concerns should be to establish the intellectual credentials of this field of study more effectively than could perhaps have been done when 'social admin' was chiefly a matter of social work training.

Already during the late 'thirties, in studies like Simey's *Principles of Social Administration* or Marian Bowley's *Housing and the State*, a tendency could be discerned to shift the study of social welfare policy away from the historical and descriptive approach that had thus far been its main characteristic and to give it a more analytical and theoretically-cogent foundation. In Sir William Beveridge's great report on social insurance,



published in 1942, and in the work of Titmuss, Donnison and others in the last twenty years, this orientation has been developed so that the discussion of the social services has come to be conducted with an increasing awareness of sociology and economics and a more explicit relationship to political theory. The account of housing, for example, given in Penelope Hall's standard work on the social services, which was first published in 1952, dealt simply with the relevant British legislation and certain fairly limited social problems, such as the development of neighbourhood-units and housing management. Nowadays housing, as an aspect of social welfare policy, is being dealt with in an international perspective, with the support of sociological studies of residential mobility and household formation and of political and economic analyses of the housing market.

In Britain, the focus of debate for the past twenty years has been upon the consequences and effectiveness of the Welfare State. By the late 1950s, it was coming to be widely believed that a progressive taxation policy had succeeded in redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor ; that the social services had been effective in eradicating poverty ; and that, in a process enchantingly described as *embourgeoisement*, everyone was becoming middle-class. The role of academic inquiry in this debate has been to challenge these popular ideas. For if sociological inquiries, such as those of Lockwood and his collaborators, have invalidated the *embourgeoisement* thesis, studies in the field of social administration have been demonstrating the equal falsity of the view that the redistribution of income and the setting up of universalist social services have done away with poverty. Professor Titmuss' study of *Income Distribution and Social Change*, for example, showed that the degree to which income had been redistributed in Britain was exaggerated by the way in which our income statistics were collated and went on to indicate that the accumulation of wealth among the better off had offset the redistribution of income effected through progressive tax legislation. A central theme in the debate over social welfare, indeed, has been that of social equality. The main conclusion has been that the

increase of wealth has gone hand in hand with the widening of inequalities between the rich and the poor. This is characteristic not only of Britain, but of the United States where it has aggravated the tension between black and white. It has also marked the relationship between the Third World and ourselves, and has been a feature of the economic and social structure of the Third World countries themselves. It demonstrates that such societies work upon the great Biblical dictum that unto them that hath shall still more be given ; and it obliges one to reflect upon the unsavoury possibility that social policy, as has been said of planning, may be little more than ' the intelligent collaboration with the inevitable '.

It will be clear, I think, even from so cursory an account of the way in which this field of study is developing, that it is engaged with major issues of great political and social significance which have to do with the central operation of our society. It is also coming more clearly into the ambit of the social sciences and of political theory, and this is bound to have important implications for the way in which the subject is taught. There are still many courses in social administration which focus their attention upon the requirements of the social work profession to which the study of social welfare policy often appears to be regarded as a mere background subject. Donnison has rightly criticised such conventional courses for doing ' little to equip students for the more senior administrative posts many of them will have to fill in ten or twenty years time '. The more theoretically-grounded analysis of social policy towards which we are now moving will certainly be better geared to that need. Not every student can aspire to the heights of professional attainment : that goes without saying. But we do our students and the professions a disservice, and we are also apt to undervalue our own significance as academic teachers, by treating them, as we sometimes do, as the mere cannon-fodder of the economy. The social services will increasingly require young men and women capable not only of dealing with social work problems in Coronation Street, but also of deliberating and deciding upon major issues of social policy with an informed, critical and subtle intelligence. That



educational objective is more likely to be achieved with the rather more demanding approach to the study of social administration which is now open to us.

Academics often give their students the impression that the most virtuous calling is that to academic research and teaching. I regard such an attitude as irresponsible. For it appears to denigrate the importance of the other professions in which most of our students will spend their working lives and to undervalue the contribution which they have to make to human well-being through professional activity. Nevertheless, a university department should not define its educational objectives simply by the current demands of a profession. There is virtue, of course, in professionalism. But the professions may also be blinkered and restrictive. In any event, the academic should not lightly give up his obligation to teach as seems right to him in the light of intellectual, rather than purely practical objectives. To do so is to scorn the freedom with which he is entrusted and which he has, not as a luxury, but as a necessary condition for the effective exercise of his prime duty to advance knowledge and contribute to understanding. For the educated man, as Professor Peters has rightly argued, is the one who can hold his professional commitment under some kind of independent and dispassionate scrutiny.

The rigidities of unscrutinised professionalism can be clearly illustrated in our field. A few years ago, I commented on the fact that, although the International Conference on Social Welfare was dealing with problems of urban development, the British delegation included only one town planner. Similarly, in conferences of the Town Planning Institute or the Regional Studies Association, social workers and social welfare administrators are usually noticeably absent. This interests me, of course, because my own professional interest lies in that particular area. But there is more than that to justify concern. For both planning and social welfare are examples of statutory intervention in the social system in an effort to promote social amelioration ; and this common conceptual identity justifies a

university department of social administration in treating together what in practice are still largely separated.

It is interesting to consider how this separation of professional outlooks has arisen. Town planning in its origins is an amalgam of social idealism and architectural technique. In the design of towns, planners have traditionally sought to maximise what might be called the calculable values like convenience, efficiency and order in physical arrangements. But they have also aimed at fostering social values such as community feeling, creativity and variety. These two sets of desiderata have been linked in the planner's world-view by a theory which I have elsewhere described as architectural determinism. This, simply put, was the view that the good physical design, for which their architectural techniques were quite well adapted, would secure the good society upon which their utopian hearts were set. If such a view conveniently gave pride of place to the town-planner in working towards a new utopia, it also made it possible for him to ignore the social welfare services as instruments of social amelioration and thus led to his failure to appreciate the contribution which the social services also had to make to social welfare.

Of course, some awareness of the relationship between town-planning and the social welfare services did develop in the British new towns, especially where social development officers came into close contact with physical planners. But even in the middle sixties, new town plans were still being prepared which gave more space to the discussion of landscaping than they did to problems of social provision. During the last ten years, however, we have slowly been obliged to think of town planning in a quite different way from that of the years immediately after the Second World War. At that time, our new towns were being designed for maximum populations of 60,000. They were planned on the assumption that social change would be slow and that a master-plan could pre-determine the shape and size of a town that would not be completed for twenty years or more ; a town which, it was further believed, could be planned as a self-contained entity. In recent years, the populations so confidently proposed for the



original new towns have often had to be substantially increased, while some of the most recently designated towns such as that at Milton Keynes have target populations of 250,000 and the proposed 'Solent City' is envisaged as a linear town which would bring an additional population of 600,000 into the area between Portsmouth and Southampton. For town planning has now, of necessity, become part of regional planning and on that scale it can no longer be conceived primarily as architectural design. It must be regarded as a problem in social and economic policy, in which physical design considerations stand only on equal terms, if not perhaps subordinate to the social scientific.

In this kind of planning, the central concerns of social welfare policy stand out much more clearly. Social welfare policy seeks to provide a minimum standard of security for the individual citizen; to redistribute wealth for the benefit of those in greatest need; and to encourage equality of opportunity. These same issues arise in slightly different guise in urban and regional planning. For just as there are social classes that are under-privileged, so also are there regions and towns that are depressed or suffering from physical decay and economic decline. Planning policy seeks to redistribute resources in order to counterbalance these adverse effects. If among individuals, who are the prime concern of the welfare services, there are those who tend to subsist in a self-reinforcing cycle of poverty or of dependence, so there are regions and towns which exhibit clusterings of difficulties which are also mutually reinforcing and which appear to be equally intractable. These are typically the problems with which regional planning is confronted; and the interrelationship of the problems of individuals with those of areas is now being recognised in policies such as the establishment of educational priority areas and urban aid programmes and in community development projects which are designed to discriminate positively in favour of such areas.

Planning can be distinguished from the more general idea of policy by its more explicit recognition of future contingency. The planning tradition has always been more concerned with

the future than has social administration because it has been much more influenced by utopian thinking. Social administrators, for their part, have been more empirical and pragmatic, hard-headed reformers rather than utopian designers. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'. So that their commitment to piece-meal reform through sober inquiry and responsible legislation has perhaps precluded the growth of as sharp a sense of the future as planners seem to have had.

Social policy, however, is increasingly having to take such considerations into account; and as planning is coming to be more closely related to social welfare policy, so the latter is beginning to incorporate the necessity for planning. For in a society as complex and dynamic as our own, social welfare policies, no less than the planning of towns, must be designed to be more effective in adapting to such changes as can be anticipated or in allowing for flexibility so as to accommodate changes that cannot so easily be foreseen. Furthermore, as a closer analysis comes to be made of the efficacy of policies and a more precise evaluation of alternatives appears possible, the hope is generated that the almost inevitable disparity between objectives and achievements might be narrowed, if not eradicated, by a more searching application of scientific analysis to the planning of social policy. Thus, social administration has become not only more social-scientific and more clearly related to general political questions; it has also begun to develop in a more technical direction which might justly be described as social planning.

No field of study is ever as sharply defined as its more fervent apologists would like to claim. Such claims are simply statements of an academic political character which tell the intruder to keep off this particular bit of academic grass. Though such definitions are clearly necessary, they should not be used to buttress walls of departmental bigotry. For the truth surely is that in our separate fields of study concepts and methods often overlap more than we seem willing to acknowledge. Still less should such academism be permitted to overshadow that



vision of the unity of scholarship which becomes the more real the more fully it is explored.

Nevertheless definitions need to be made. Social administration is about the problems of intervening in the operation of society in order to secure in greater or more effective measure some concept of social welfare. With this concern for social welfare, so central to its tradition and yet so difficult of precise definition, it is inevitably interested in the justification of the ends of social policy as well as in the evaluation of the means that are adopted to achieve those ends. Thus, though increasingly influenced by and integrated with the other social sciences, it is concerned no less with the kind of objectives which arise in the pursuit of welfare than with the circumstances of their achievement. It is this overt concern with ethical questions that most clearly distinguishes social administration from modern sociology. Sociology has to do with 'the systematic study of social relations' and, in particular, with exploring the regularities which such relationships exhibit and which sustain the hope of a predictive social science. Informative and illuminating as such accounts may be, they have often distorted as much as they have clarified our understanding of social action by their failure to take account of purpose and commitment in social institutions. Our field, on the other hand, cannot ignore such concepts since it also seeks to evaluate the purposes which influence the ends of social policy.

This means, of course, that it is not concerned to be a social science in the sense of a natural science of society. Such an aim seems to me to be no more than a will-o'-the-wisp luring the social scientist into the quagmire of self-deception. The most persuasive grounds for the belief that such a science might be possible are the existence of regularities in human conduct and in the patterning of social institutions. These regularities it is the function of the social sciences to elicit and to explain: and planning depends upon such explanation. They give grounds for hoping that prediction is possible and I would not wish to deny that some limited but useful predictions can be made in the social sciences. Nor should one allow premature scepticism to stand in the way of the development of such a science. On

the other hand, one must surely try to judge what it is reasonable to expect of a social science, given the nature of the phenomena with which it has to deal.

I come to the conclusion that the social sciences are unlikely to become predictive sciences in any way comparable to physics. My reasons for this scepticism concern the circumstances that affect the validation and use of generalisations in the social sciences. These seem to me to be so dissimilar from those affecting the natural sciences as to render any analogy quite mistaken. First of all, in most of the social sciences, it is impossible to establish by direct experiment the conditions under which regularities obtain. We must fall back accordingly upon sleight-of-hand like the *ceteris paribus* clause in economics or upon what might be called 'intellectual experiments' such as the one Weber undertook in seeking to validate his theory of the relationship between Protestantism and the rise of capitalism. With such devices, important though they are, it is hardly possible to establish proof as conclusively as can be done in a truly experimental science. Furthermore, the future circumstances in which a generalisation might be invoked might easily differ in highly significant respects from the conditions originally postulated for it to be valid; and these new circumstances may in any case not even be recognised at the time to be significant. Finally, the fact that human beings learn what social scientists find out about the structure of their behaviour makes it possible for them, as well as for the planners, to control and modify that behaviour and even to invalidate such predictions as have been made. In other words, human conduct, unlike natural phenomena, is qualified by a constant and irreducible dialectical interplay between an objective and a subjectively-defined reality, so that the observable regularities with which the social sciences deal are, to say the least of it, very different indeed from the kind of regularities which are the object of the natural sciences.

From such a sceptical position, neither the restraints nor the expectations engendered by a belief in a natural science of society retain their force. Social administration is therefore no longer bound to eschew a serious consideration of the ethical



basis of social welfare for the sake of maintaining what I can only regard as a falsely-conceived notion of positive science. But I am fully aware that, to those who consider scientific knowledge to be the paradigm of all valid knowledge and who regard scientific propositions as objective, while other kinds of proposition, and especially value-judgements, are subjective and untrustworthy, such a view will no doubt appear to be a repudiation of rationality and all academic propriety.

But can one continue to hold such a binary view of knowledge? In the lengthy dispute which took place in another university a year or so ago about establishing a chair of theology, it was argued that while science was objective, rational, open-minded, and therefore good, theology was subjective, dogmatic, closed-minded, and therefore bad. Those who advanced this kind of argument, it might be noted, had usually read no theology and were frequently engaged in a quixotic fight with the antiquated and garbled religion of their childhood, which should long since have been repudiated. Alas for their case, however, right in the middle of the debate Thomas Kuhn's study of scientific revolutions appeared which argued that a prime condition for the scientist's undertaking sustained and difficult research was his dogmatic commitment to the basic theoretical paradigms which alone gave his research significance; and that radically new data in all the sciences, far from being considered open-mindedly, were received sceptically if they appeared to call accepted truths in question.

Conversely, arguments in the social sciences, though they are mostly conducted in words rather than in figures, and though not susceptible of the kind of experimental proof which is available in some of the more quantitative sciences, are not for that reason conducted irrationally. To listen to some critics, one might suppose that anything could count as valid in the humanities and social sciences. But such arguments fail to note that in these fields too there are criteria for evaluating the validity of conclusions which are analogous to those available to the natural scientist. In these fields too there are well-established procedures for testing evidence, for assessing

its weight, for judging whether it has been justly used to support a given conclusion and so on. One argues within conventions of rational dispute so that not everything that is said is of equal validity, and discrimination can be made even in these fields between evidence and conclusions of differing degrees of acceptability. For discourse need not cease to be rational for being unscientific; and the quantitative methods on which the advanced sciences so much depend are only one kind of rational procedure among many others. Social administration, therefore, in repudiating the claim to be in any sense a positive science, and in wishing to incorporate value-judgements as well as explanatory propositions within its purview, does not thereby cease to subscribe to the canons of rational discourse by which the university community is defined.

Certain problems, however, do arise in our field, as they do in any applied social science, out of its relationship to the political arena and it is to two of these that I should now like to turn. The first arises from the propensity of some social scientists to desire the world to be as regular and ordered as their scientific view of it would lead them to believe it should be. The social sciences are the product of a society that is profoundly influenced by the calculating rationalism which is the central feature of modern capitalism; and social scientists are constantly prone to overstate the degree to which the rational planning of our institutions could overcome the difficulties which mankind faces. Max Weber long since noted a tendency for the sciences to claim to be the sources not only of specialised scientific knowledge but of philosophical world-views as well. The temptation to which social scientists are often exposed is to be too ready to assume that knowledge is power.

This kind of rationalistic arrogance has deep roots in the Benthamite tradition within social administration, though the social amelioration which this tradition has underpinned certainly precludes anyone from denying its value out of hand. But it is clear that the more we move towards a planning idiom in which quantitative techniques predominate, the greater the danger that they will so overwhelm our imaginations that



non-quantitative considerations get left out of account. Systems-planning and cost-benefit analysis, which are helpful and important devices for bringing rigour and clarity into the planning process, are both examples of this. In systems planning, for instance, the political process is taken for granted ; that is to say, it is ignored. That process aims to establish the objectives or values in planning. But values, in this approach, are not thought of as commitments that grow out of a context of political thinking and discussion. They are little more than simple building blocks that the planner conveniently slots into his system for technical reasons. This is, of course, acceptable in analysis. The danger, however, is that systems planners are likely to be saying that value-judgements in planning are only a matter of technical decision. The danger of excessive rationality arises when these procedures, convenient as they are for analysis, are assumed to be capable of solving normative problems for us. Such a transposition arose in the Roskill Committee where, as Professor Self has so clearly pointed out, cost-benefit analysis, which seeks to place the items involved in making a decision upon some common financial yardstick, was used to usurp the proper role of political judgement.

The sad truth is that the social scientist whose commitment to quantification overrides his good sense wishes and thus believes that the world could be governed by this kind of analytical approach. Nor is it difficult to find examples of this tendency. In an account of work being done in the new and interesting field of architectural psychology, for instance, one psychologist noted that no clear relationship could be discovered between the variation of temperatures in a building and the performance of tasks. He described this finding as 'rather depressing'. Another psychologist in the same field hypothesized that annoyance caused by noise would vary in inverse proportion to the logarithm of the distance between the hearer and the source of the noise. He found, however, only a low correlation between the physical level of noise and how noisy people actually found it. He was obviously disappointed at the absence of a more precise result and went on to express

the hope that the application of more exact methods would produce what he called 'more useful results'.

How interesting all this is ! For why be depressed if human behaviour is not entirely susceptible of such precise determination ? May some aspects of human behaviour perhaps not permit of statistically significant measurement ? And may not the absence of such a relationship be a scientific finding no less valid than the presence of such a correlation ? Why, in any case, consider such results as less useful ? For they could surely have quite as much relevance for practice by indicating to the architect an area of indeterminacy in behaviour and hence an area open for the use of his discretion in design. But just as nature is said to abhor a vacuum, so science abhors indeterminacy. But such an unwillingness to take seriously what cannot be rationally calculated could constitute a grave danger in the application of knowledge to social policy, especially if this did not correspond to the actual nature of things.

T. S. Eliot once made the point that one should never attempt to impose upon life more consistency than it could stand. The attempt to impose a rational-scientific calculus upon social phenomena and, worst of all, upon the conduct of politics is clear in the examples I have given. Eliot's warning is hardly misplaced. Certainly, the limitations of rationality are acknowledged in the social sciences. In the study of decision-making, for instance, it has been recognised that a comprehensive rationality is impossible, for not only is politics itself not rational, but the human capacity for problem-solving is limited, information is invariably incomplete and the variables involved in social affairs are indeterminate. So far so good. But this often seems to be merely a token acknowledgement of the limitations of rationality which supposes that what is not rational must be *irrational* and therefore something undesirable and to be eradicated, and which thus fails to take account of the significance of *non-rational* factors in human affairs.

What I mean by this non-rational element can readily be illustrated in the phenomenon of loving. Suppose I were to feel that it was high time I loved my wife. I might well say : it would be well to love her by twelve noon tomorrow. And how



should I set about it ? Well, perhaps I should telephone her ; send her some flowers ; spend quarter of an hour or so thinking about her ; kiss her maybe when I get back. But alas, it is not like that at all. For it is clear that loving is not susceptible of that kind of rational calculation ; nor is happiness, nor being ; nor very many things that constitute the *summum bonum* of human welfare. In such matters, indeed, self-consciousness may easily get in the way and rational knowledge, far from being power, may be simply nonsense. For loving or being happy cannot be achieved or positively planned for with any assurance of success, since it is not susceptible to the calculative rational idiom which, in most of our affairs, is certainly the natural and most effective idiom to use. These properties of human living are matters which need to be understood in a more poetic idiom as a grace, a gift, for which the only valid response is thankful acceptance. And such features of personal identity, as it seems to me, need to be understood and incorporated into our thinking about social welfare if the limitations upon rationality in policy-making are to be clearly and wittingly understood and if the arrogance of rationalism is to be restrained.

The second problem in the study of social policy on which I wish to comment is its tendency to become politicised. This field of study is particularly likely to attract as students and teachers people who wish to make use of their knowledge and understanding to engage more effectively in public affairs. That is indeed desirable. Intellectual endeavour does not operate in a social vacuum ; and the academic who is thus involved may contribute considerably to the dialogue between theory and evidence upon which scholarship is built. But the question needs to be raised as to the terms on which an academic is properly engaged in such affairs. It is particularly relevant to pose it now that it is coming to be more widely accepted that, in fields like this, value-judgements cannot be effectively excluded from academic concerns. For there is some danger that this honest acknowledgement will be used to deny the distinction between scholarship and political ideology

which in an earlier generation Karl Mannheim, for example, with a harsher Continental experience behind him, rightly sought to maintain intact.

This distinction appears to have been ignored in a recent volume of essays on planning by a well-known social scientist ; and it shows itself in particular in one revealing phrase. The author is arguing that the planning process in this country allocates resources unequally between those who can make choices about where they live and those whose freedom is limited by much sharper constraints within the housing market. He argues, in a perhaps unguarded comment, that some social scientists '*should be obliged* to make themselves aware of urban problems' and, more significantly, goes on to say that those of us who are either 'too complacent or too selfish to consider the plight of those less privileged than themselves can constitute the common enemy'.

Even though one might agree with the redistributionist sentiments which the author is expressing, one must still deprecate the crudely ideological tone which informs these statements. The characteristic of this style, as it shows itself throughout the volume, is that it denounces views other than the author's own as exemplifying moral weaknesses—complacency or selfishness—and brands them as those of an 'enemy'. It ignores the obligation, which is especially necessary for the academic who acknowledges a commitment to political values, of rebutting arguments with which he disagrees on intellectual grounds ; by demonstrating the reasons why propositions are or are not valid. The ideological style, on the contrary, is inclined to ignore these scholarly niceties : it snidely brands other people's ideas instead of analysing them ; it denigrates arguments by attributing dubious motives to their proponents ; and it degrades scholarly analysis by resorting to craft : 'Finding the ideology of the expert (it is said) is easy once one gets the knack'. This kind of thing, this smearing of scholarship in the dirt of ideology ignores the obligation which an academic commitment imposes particularly clearly upon the social scientist who recognises that he is bound in the very concepts he uses to express implicitly, if not explicitly, some political



orientation. For since he is a member of a scholarly community, *that* engagement must affect the mode of his commitment ; and to describe other views in that context as those of ' the enemy ' is to depart from the discipline of dispassionate analysis which is surely the prime criterion of an academic society. For, if I may paraphrase an epigram of Raymond Aron's, though the social scientist cannot claim to be politically neutral in his studies, he must—to the degree that he remains an academic—constantly seek to be impartial.

That kind of distinction is these days often ruled out of court, since it is assumed that to have demonstrated that value-orientations cannot be avoided in the social sciences means that one must align oneself unequivocally on one side or the other in the class-struggle and in the inevitable contest between progress and reaction. But it is important to notice that the effort to achieve some degree of impartiality and independence of judgement in a far too credulous society is itself a political role ; and that it is to that role that the academic is distinctively called.

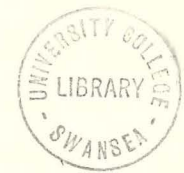
The atrophy of the idea of impartiality can be noted in the decay of the word ' disinterested '. This term is now coming to mean that I couldn't care less ; that I'm not interested in, or that I'm apathetic towards something ; rather than the stronger meaning: that I am taking a view which I hope is unbiased and uninfluenced by personal interest. In that sense, one might say without any trace of paradox, that one was desperately interested in acting disinterestedly. By the same token, one may also notice that the concepts of objectivity and impartiality are no longer clearly distinguished. It is true that a recent memorandum from the British Sociological Association noted that sociologists could no longer claim to be capable of taking ' a completely impartial *and* objective view of social phenomena '. But one might well wonder whether this distinction was definitely intended. For in the social sciences, while every textbook on methods considers the concept of objectivity, never a one seems to discuss the idea of impartiality, since they appear to be assumed to be the same thing.

But that is surely not the case ; and the practice of assimil-

ating them only bespeaks again the tendency in modern life to over-emphasize what is technical at the expense of what is a question of moral disposition. For objectivity is scientific and technical ; impartiality is not. Objectivity, as the term is used in the social sciences, has to do chiefly with techniques : with methods of constructing sound interview schedules that do not prejudge answers ; of using statistical techniques to show what weight can be assigned to numerical differences. It has to do with the tools by which data are collected and by which evidence is appraised and wrought into theoretically significant conclusions : with their reliability and their validity. But a command of such tools does not ensure that that which is so scrupulously validated is dispassionately or impartially argued ; is argued, that is to say, with a due regard for the fair evaluation of arguments and evidence that might throw doubt upon what is being proposed. Scientists, even social scientists, have been known to be bigots. But as C. P. Scott said in that famous comment : it is well to be frank ; it is even better to be fair. And the being fair is a moral property, a disposition to attend scrupulously and open-mindedly to all sides of the case. This is not encompassed just by objective techniques, since it is evidenced primarily in the use of words rather than figures, and especially in the tone with which the words themselves are used, and since the exercise of impartial judgement is developed primarily within a community which corporately devotes itself to that very demanding task.

Such a property in scholarship will certainly be denounced by the cynic as either subjective or bourgeois. Impartiality, it will be asserted, is no more than a cover for reactionary viewpoints. In any event, impartiality is not possible since we can do no more than express a view that is consistent with the interests of our class, which—as we are so often told—is inevitably concerned with maintaining the *status quo*. Let's face it, it will be said, that's the hard truth of the matter.

A very common tendency is to suppose that life can be understood in only one way. Thus we frequently find arguments going from the valid statement that class position may influence





attitudes, to the invalid inference that attitudes and beliefs are no more than reflections of class interest. The tendency to suppose that attitudes and beliefs are nothing but the products of social determination is such a very common feature of contemporary thinking that one might well be convinced of it if one did not also notice that the proponents of such views always seem to be able to exempt themselves from the determinism which they propose for others. This, if nothing else, should lead us to recognise that the complexity of life demands a corresponding complexity of outlook and a willingness to try to reconcile these only apparent opposites of determination and impartiality. At all events, it would be in that dialectical spirit that I should reply to the charge that impartiality was merely a bourgeois pose, a front, a defence of class interest. For a society is a combination of objective structures and of commitments. No one can deny, for example, that a university is in some respects a bureaucracy, that it may even be compared to a factory. But it would also be a very false view of a university (or alternatively, a very poor university), which did not note that it was also in some, albeit marginal and different sense, a community governed by a notion of impartiality. Such a community, however, unlike a factory or bureaucracy, would only be manifested through, and vindicated in the commitment of its members to that virtue: a commitment which it lies within the discretion of a new professor to honour and further as best he can. This honouring, indeed, makes for a tradition which can maintain itself against the odds and it is in the spirit of that tradition that I should wish to reply and to end.

For I should wish to bow my head to those whose commitment to this tradition of impartial judgement I have sought to share, and whose example would help to repudiate the cynic. This tradition is not confined within the walls of the university. I reflect upon the untutored commitment of my father who, through all adversities of unemployment in Lancashire, continued to uphold learning as valuable not only for its contribution to our common welfare, but also for man as man. If one had to be on the dole, I recall him saying, would it not be better to be unemployed *and* educated than unemployed and

not? I think, further, of Tom Simey, my first professor, who, at a time when sociology was still a highly suspect field of study in this country, despised by the traditional arts men and scoffed at by the scientists, succeeded in the late 'forties in founding a research department in Liverpool, which gave a much-needed foothold in Academe to many of us of an oncoming generation who now hold chairs today. His continuing commitment to a sociology that should be both empirical and normative, a commitment more acceptable now perhaps than when he first argued the case for it, was made in the teeth of unpopularity and obscurantism. And it is with evidence of that kind that I should start to vindicate the possibility of the independence of judgement upon which impartiality itself is based.

But it is by symbolic acts that commitment is particularly strengthened. I recall very clearly the occasion in Glasgow in which the idea of impartiality, of honesty before the argument found for me its most convincing expression. In the early phases of research with John Mack, I happened to spot a *non-sequitur* in a critique which he had made of one of my working papers. He was some twenty years my senior, and when I pointed this error out to him I awaited his reaction with curiosity and a touch of apprehension. Mack read the piece, spoke approvingly of my acumen and to my amazement tore his own paper up before my eyes and threw it into the basket.

Years later, I found an account of similar conduct on the part of G. D. H. Cole, who was both Mack's tutor and Simey's at Oxford. In a description of Oxford in the 'twenties, Hugh Gaitskell told of an argument which he had with Cole about guild socialism, on which Cole had been writing a book. 'Eventually (says Gaitskell) we went to bed. The next morning Douglas said he had been thinking about it all night and decided I was right. I was deeply touched and absurdly pleased when later the preface to the book contained a moving reference to our struggle. But I mention it to show the complete equality which Douglas accorded to unknown young men half his age'.



I refer to such instances in order to indicate the possibility of repudiating the cynic who might deny outright the possibility of impartiality or integrity. But for me they also indicate the reality of a living academic tradition. I like to think that it might have been that self-same Cole who first showed my mentors, Simey and Mack, what all this meant and that in experiencing it through them, I was also learning to put my own commitment to its continuance. At all events, I can only hope that some such commitment will also inform the discretion which I shall exercise in this new chair, and that it, in its turn, might help to fashion the commitment of oncoming generations to those virtues for which a university so distinctively stands.

