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THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY: SOCIAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC AUTHORITY

EUGENE J. MEEHAN

Department of Political Science and Public Policy Administration
University of Missouri, St. Louis, U.S.A.

Um exame da relação entre a universidade e a comunidade mais ampla, particularmente nos Estados Unidos, sugere, ao contrário da opinião convencional, que: (1) as ciências sociais só raramente satisfazem as exigências intelectuais requeridas na elaboração racional de um plano político, e é muito improvável que elas melhorem seu desempenho no futuro próximo; (2) se a capacidade requerida viesse a ser desenvolvida, ela não seria utilizada; e portanto (3), a estratégia geral de se voltar à universidade em busca de assistência para um planejamento político está gravemente mal orientada e deve ser abandonada.

An examination of the relation between the university and the wider community, focused particularly on the United States, suggests that contrary to received opinion: (1) the social sciences can only rarely satisfy the intellectual requirements for reasoned policymaking and are very unlikely to improve their performance in the near future; (2) if the needed capacity were developed, it would not be used; and therefore (3), an overall strategy of looking to the universities for assistance with public policymaking is seriously misdirected and should be abandoned.

The assumption that mutually beneficial relations between public universities and their local or national communities can be extended and developed far beyond their present boundaries is intuitively attractive and widely accepted, implicity or explicitly. Even those who are dubious about the propriety of extensive professional involvement in society's everyday affairs, or about the benefits that can be obtained from an extension of those relations by those within the university, usually agree that the university has much to offer the wider community. The reasoning on which the assumption depends is simple

and plausible, though somewhat "philanthropic" in tone: a university is a primary source of knowledge and culture; no human community can for long prosper without both; therefore, the community needs, and will benefit greatly from, a closer association with the university. Areas commonly cited as potentially fruitful for extending university-community relations range from cultural and recreational activities to the provision of highly sophisticated technical assistance. The social sciences, in most cases, are expected to help with the ordering and management of community affairs, with "policy-making" in the broad sense of the term. The halcyon days of agricultural extension (now fading rapidly), provide a ready model for emulation, suggesting institutional arrangements that might be employed, the kinds of assistance that could be provided, and the benefits that might be expected to follow for both parties to the cooperation. By and large, that set of fundamental assumptions, that basic "scenario", has guided discussion, and action, relating to the interrelations of social scientists and public authority, local and national, since the middle of the twentieth century.

In those general terms, my three primary purposes in this essay are: first, to challenge the validity of the conventional scenario; second, to suggest a more accurate or realistic alternative construction of the potential inherent in the existing situation; and third, to explore the implications of that alternative set of assumptions for future relations between the social sciences and public authority. More specifically, three of the commonplaces in the conventional wisdom on the subject will be rejected and replaced: (1) that social science has the capacity to assist with reasoned and defensible policy-making; (2) that public authorities have the will and desire to obtain and use that capacity; and (3) that mutual cooperation is a sound strategy for achieving optimal performance by either public authorities or the public universities. It will be argued that: (a) the social sciences can only rarely satisfy the intellectual requirements for reasoned policy-making and are very unlikely to generate the needed capacity in the near future unless ma-

jor and highly improbable changes occur within those disciplines; (b) if the capacity *were* developed, it would not be used unless major, and equally improbable, changes took place in the normative commitments and practices of those who govern; and (c) in consequence, an approach to the mutual relations between government and the university that focuses on assisting government with its policy-making is profoundly mistaken and should be abandoned. An alternative strategy more appropriate to real world conditions is needed.

1. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS AND/OR PREJUDICES

American private universities, which are usually far more prestigious than their public counterparts, are easily recognized as enclaves of special privilege, sharply separated from the local population from earliest times. Even the student body being educated usually comes from other geographic areas. The town and gown distinction long recognized in Britain is just as evident on American private campuses. Everyday relations between university and community are not infrequently hostile and almost invariably exploitative. The local merchants plunder the student body with a rapacity unmatched since the plains Indians savaged passing wagon trains. The students, freed by distance and isolation from the restrictions on behavior enforced at home, not infrequently resemble an army of occupation – commandeering, and often abusing, local resources, both human and material. The principal function of such universities has been acculturation or socialization; excepting professional training, there has been very little emphasis placed on the practical value of the education imparted to the students. Similarly, the principal impact of the private university on the local community has been made through the university's payroll, purchases, and other business dealings rather than its intellectual production. The situation as it appeared at the end of the 19th century remains, for the most part, little changed toward the end of the twentieth.

Public universities, whose members are as aware of the importance of prestige and honorifics as any other segment of society, and are equally willing to indulge in emulative behavior in order to share some of the benefits, tend to follow the patterns set by the larger and more prestigious private universities so far as they can. That is, they have tended to avoid community involvement except in highly technical (and even arcane) matters. There have been sporadic efforts to change, of course, but until the end of World War II, none was very successful. The most recent, and most important, impulse toward increased involvement by public universities in general, and the social sciences in particular, in the affairs of community and nation, began in the period immediately after World War II. The need, and demand, for public services had expanded dramatically by the 40s. Concurrently, the general public's assessement of the ability or competence of public authority, particularly at the local level, had declined. In economic terms, more and better corn was being demanded from government at a time when production was widely believed to be declining. Understandably, many of those involved with the problem assumed that powerful assistance could be obtained from the state universities.

Not everyone agreed. Significant groups within both the community and the goverment regarded the "ivory tower eggheads" in the universities with distrust and suspicion (and some at least now feel that events have more than justified those suspicions). Within the universities, there were also profound differences over the extent to which university faculty, public or private, could involve themselves directly in the affairs of government without losing some of their independence and neutrality – or moral detachment. Some were adamantly opposed; others, especially those critical of the then-current social science, believed that deeper involvement in community affairs might serve as a badly needed counterweight to the perceived trend to scholasticism and formalism, and a concurrent move away from practical concerns, within the social science departments of the public universities.

In principle at least, a commitment to developing the kind of knowledge required to fulfill human purposes that were themselves rooted in real world concerns offered a way to obtain qualitative improvements in disciplinary performance. From that perspective, a community in need of intellectual assistance provided the same kind of direction of effort, and performance yardstick, that the hog and corn patch had earlier provided the university agronomist. Regretfully, more than three decades of efforts to further that commitment have served mainly to reinforce skepticism about the future. The basic reasoning remains sound, but up to a point only. Involvement in local affairs remains tenable as a necessary condition for attaining the desired improvement in academic performance but is clearly insufficient of and by itself. Success depends on both effort and environmental conditions, as might be expected. It is not enough to teach the farmer how to milk the cow; the cow must also be taught how to be milked. Major changes would have to take place in both university and community before the enterprise could be expected to succeed.

An effort to involve social scientists in community affairs in a responsible way entails some very important modifications in the established academic tradition (which came primarily from the private schools). The enormous, and largely undirected, expansion of public universities in the United States after 1945 seemed to provide a golden opportunity to introduce such changes. Traditionally, the universities had served the community mainly by educating the youth, by introducing them directly to current knowledge and by expanding the stock of such knowledge (using "knowledge" in the then-accepted meaning of the term within the universities) through its research efforts. In some cases, it seems that the principal contribution to the local community was the provision of spectator sports such as athletic events, particularly in those (rare) cases where public universities were located close to major population centers. If the school was in a rural area, which was the rule rather than the exception, it served primarily as a source of

agricultural services for the surrounding farming community. Indeed, few of the public universities regarded themselves, or were regarded by others, as service centers for the community. The need, and the opportunity, to change that situation, particularly with respect to the social sciences, was for the most part ignored or mishandled.

To the extent that it has failed, the unsuccessful effort to engage the university's skills on behalf of the community at large represents an enormous loss, a social tragedy of the first order – in precisely the same sense that the failure to use government as a device for improving systematically the lives of those who are part of the community being governed is a disastrous and terrible waste of potential. Thus far, both kinds of losses have been concealed behind Panglossian verbiage, and a capacity for ignoring real world observables that is astonishing given the allegedly pragmatic and product-oriented American culture. The appearance of state universities in the nineteenth century had significantly altered the potential relations between university and community. In some fields, notably agriculture, business, and engineering, a close relation developed between community needs and the direction of university activities. In others, including the social sciences (which were then administratively embedded in the humanities in most cases) relations continued unchanged. In effect, social science remained part of a "snob culture" inherited from the days when a university served as a training ground for the clergy and a socialization locus for the offspring of the wealthy – who were taught what they needed to know about economic affairs through on-the-job training. The snob culture, needless to say, usually denigrated the value of work carried out in response to community need. The extreme form of such snobbery appears in a toast attributed to Cambridge mathematicians: "Here's to mathematics, may it never be useful to anyone". A more "moderate" version of the same attitude appears when an academic journal refuses to give serious consideration to case studies of "local" problems.

It is worth noting that the differences in the relations that developed between the various university disciplines and the local or national community seem to depend very much on the type of knowledge being produced – or more precisely on the relation between academic criteria of acceptability and the nature of community needs in the area in question. Thus in engineering, agriculture, or business, closer relations with an appropriate segment of the wider community have meant nothing more than a direct expansion of existing knowledge, and its applications, produced according to traditional criteria of acceptability. The agronomist might focus upon topics of concern to local farmers but the inquiry to follow was carried out using the established criteria or intellectual norms of the discipline. In other words, some fields of study either had in place, or came to accept, criteria of quality control that were adequate for both disciplinary acceptance and the satisfaction of community needs. Such criteria were usually pragmatic, closely linked to the satisfaction of human needs or purposes, and readily appreciated without any special knowledge or training. The need for either pretense, or pretentiousness (and the opportunity to profit from it) was minimized if not eliminated. The social sciences were either less fortunate or more obstinate. By and large, the products of their studies that were useful in the wider community counted for little or nothing (or even negatively) in the academic career; those that led to improved academic status found few if any uses in the community. The traditional emphasis on priestly training, and on honorific and arcane forms of self-indulgence, remained unchanged.

The "window of opportunity" for changing the nature and role of social science was greatly expanded after 1950 by the enormous increase in the number of urban branches to state universities. An urban location provided the social scientist with an opportunity to become involved in local affairs that paralleled the advantages enjoyed earlier by the schools of agriculture from a rural location. In many cases, that opportunity was extended and reinforced by the addition of subsidized

government research centers, urban study centers, and policy study centers. Such institutional arrangements provided a potential channel for legitimating and funding a wide range of community-centered research projects targeted at knowledge useful to the community at large. The amount of resources allocated to such purposes, either directly or indirectly, increased dramatically at all levels of government. In many respects, the 1960s and 1970's can be regarded as the decades of opportunity for creating a practically-oriented social science, a period in which tradition might be transgressed without penalty, or even rewarded.

If the situation at the beginning of the 1970s was as favorable as any time in history, the condition at the end of the 1980s suggests that the opportunity has been lost or mishandled. So long as the products of inquiry are measured qualitatively rather than quantitatively, there is little evidence of any significant increase in the contribution that social science has made, or can make, to the conduct of public affairs, either locally or nationally – and that during a time when the need for more intellectual competence increased almost exponentially. That is not to say that an experiment was tried and failed, for there was no experiment. Indeed, there is little or no evidence of serious efforts to introduce the kinds of changes needed to move the social sciences toward the production of useful knowledge or even to work out systematically what those changes were. The few rare efforts to do so attracted little attention, funding, or support. It is true that conditions changed as the social sciences expanded, and the relation between social science and the community altered considerably, but the intellectual apparatus in use changed little with respect to such basics as the overall conception of the nature and purpose of inquiry. The "approach" to inquiry (or in some cases the label attached to it or to the conceptual apparatus employed) may have been updated but the purposes sought and the criteria applied to the products remained the same. Put differently the changes were not theory-driven, as they must be if their effect is to be

significant or useful. In effect, the birth and death of such conceptual or terminological innovations more closely resembled the life history of amusement or clothing fads among the youth more than a systematic effort to develop an adequate mode of inquiry, judged in terms of the value to the community of its products. They arrived, and departed, without any detectable reason or justification; their departure was unmourned; their legacy was trivial.

To make matters worse, the expansion of contact between government and social scientist turned out to be an intellectual disaster for both parties involved, in part because of the use that was made of academic expertise by those in government and in part because it disclosed the willingness if not eagerness, of those in academia to be so used – for a price. In most cases, academics served to provide an imprimatur, a special form of testimonial advertising that bordered intellectually on television commercials. The knowledge produced by academics as a basis for action, was rarely if ever applied. Unfortunately, that can probably be regarded as a blessing in disguise, given the quality of what was produced. Economics, which is perhaps the most widely touted of the social sciences, and may therefore seem an exception to the rule, in fact is an exemplar of the criticism. There is no evidence whatever of any recent increase in the capacity available for directing human actions on defensible grounds within the field, and that capacity was, as of 1980, grossly overrated. (See, Meehan 1983). The only major exception is agricultural economics, and that field too has deteriorated significantly in recent decades – become increasingly abstract and "theoretical".

The effect was devastating, and on both parties to the burgeoning relationship. From the perspective of those who governed, academics appeared increasingly as another species of "hired gun", whose behavior once placed on the payroll was highly predictable because it could be controlled. Within the universities, the effect resembled an intellectual plague that swept through the community of scholars, separating the

"funded" from the "unfunded", (the quick and the dead?) and altering the characteristics of both. The "unfunded" tended to withdraw even further from an active concern with current community problems; the "funded" came to focus increasingly on how to remain funded, generating a new subspecies of the genre – the grantsman or grantswoman. Somewhere in the process, the integrity of both groups was seriously damaged, to the ultimate loss of nearly everyone.

Other aspects of the burgeoning relationship produced equally unacceptable results. Thus, academics were also appointed to temporary (and even permanent) positions in government, and student internships multiplied substantially. But there is little or no evidence to suggest that either the faculty or the students, not to say the government agency involved, benefitted greatly from such appointments, and much to suggest the contrary. Student internships, for example, were little more than a disguised subsidy, distributed non-randomly across the population. Training students for governmental employment became a major occupation for some colleges and universities, but this had little impact on either curriculum content or teaching methods beyond some changes in labeling that were clearly meant to improve the image, and thus increase saleability, whilst leaving the underlying assumptions intact. Thus "policy analysis" and "policy studies" became major foci for teaching and research in the 1980s, but the published materials that have appeared under that rubric bear a striking resemblance to disiplinary antecedents, suitably relabeled.

To put the point squarely, the quality of the knowledge produced by social scientists, judged in terms of what is needed for directing actions on defensible grounds, has improved little in the past three decades. Indeed, it may actually have deteriorated as statistical analysis of standard sets of aggregate data increased – and in some cases actually replaced careful study of particular cases. The individual social sciences have changed, certainly, and their products are different. But judged in terms of the requirements for directing human actions, which

is the basis for assessment appropriate for the purposes sought here, the change has produced few if any significant improvements. That is, if the output of social science is examined in terms of the rude and pragmatic criteria best exemplified by the weight of the farmer's hog at butchering time, or the volume of the corn crop at harvest, there is little sign of improvement, although costs have expanded enormously. The increase in "policy" studies may in fact be attributable to the same reasons as an earlier increase in the number of "planners" being trained and employed: government encouragement, or co-optation. In both cases, academic "hired guns" were induced (monetarily) to join with government officials in systematic forays on the public treasury. Each needed the cooperation of the other to gain access to the loot. But the products of their activities bore little relation to the kinds of knowledge required to improve local corn production or to increase the weight of the local hog.

2. A NEEDS-BASED ANALYSIS

Such generalized commentary refers necessarily to the mainstream of the social sciences, and is subject to the usual exceptions. Nevertheless, it is sufficiently accurate to warrant major revisions in the conventional assessment of the university's potential contribution to the conduct of community affairs. A much more accurate construction and assessment of present potential is essential for suggesting and justifying proposals for change. We begin, therefore, by seeking to establish the present capacity of the disciplines included in social science, measured by reference to the intellectual prerequisites for actually assisting the local community.

In those terms, the first task is to demonstrate that the social sciences are at present quite unable, even if they were willing, to supply the kind of knowledge required for reasoned and defensible policy-making. Their inability is not a function of the peculiar character of the subject matter, as is often maintained by social scientists, but of

the unwillingness or inability of the social sciences to follow the lead of agriculture, or medicine, and locate the purposes of their inquiries in human needs. Given the severity of the requirements for reasoned and defensible policy-making, the effect of refusing a commitment to the fulfillment of human purposes is lethal. That is, if a "policy" is taken to be a "guide to action", as is broadly accepted everywhere, then the requirements lie well beyond the capacity of the social sciences in all but a few isolated cases. The reasoning on which that assessment depends is most clearly seen in the context of a particular problem, such as increasing the weight of the farmer's hog in a cost-effective way, or in medicine finding a cure for an illness that does not involve killing the patient. The kinds of knowledge required to answer such questions are readily established. The detailed reasoning needed to do so lies beyond the scope of this paper, but is available elsewhere (Meehan 1981, 1988 and 1990).

3. THE INTELLECTUAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DIRECTING ACTIONS

If action is defined in terms of the exercise of voluntary human capacity to produce change in the environment, which makes it possible to supply a justification within the limits of human capacity, the indicators of action will be either the appearance of a change in the environment or inhibition of an expected change. Reasoned direction of action, or the justification for exercising that capacity in a particular way, requires the fulfillment of at least eight fundamental preconditions.

1) Since every action is analytically equivalent to a choice, there must be a clear purpose to be achieved by the action; that purpose will be normatively determined. Defensible actions, in other words, must be directed to achieving an outcome that has already been judged preferable to the available alternatives on normative grounds. It follows that the actor's capacity, the range of actions available to the actor at a given time and place, must be specified. This can be very difficult to

do, particularly when the "actor" is a collectivity such as a legislature. Even with respect to an individual, the need to estimate capacity can raise some complex and difficult questions: how to treat psychological incapacity, for example. The person directing or evaluating actions needs to be aware of the quality of the estimates of capacity that control the selection of outcomes taken into account in the comparisons used to establish or to justify preferences.

2) The consequences expected to follow from each of the actions available to the actor must be projected on the future as far as current knowledge permits, and the accuracy/reliability of the projections estimated. How adequately that can be done is a function of various factors, of which the time, resources, and knowledge available for the task, and the relative significance of the outcomes as assessed using the accepted normative apparatus, are the more important. An instrument is needed that will enable the actor or critic to project the content of the set of outcomes available for choice, of a set of film clips of the future that includes the primary human consequences of each of the available actions. Such instruments correspond very closely to what is meant by a "theory" in the experimental sciences and will be so-labeled here, but the reader should know that few of the instruments labeled "theories" in social science have the requisite capacity.

Choices are limited to what is actually possible; ideals or imaginary cases cannot be included in any choice that must be defended by reference to experience. Every farmer would prefer corn that both tastes better and maximizes profits, other things being equal, but only the corn that can actually be produced is included in the available choices. The first task of the theorist, whether an agronomist or a member of some other field, is to provide the user with the instruments needed to determine the content of the various outcomes available for choice in a particular situation. In effect, agricultural research is directed to expanding the range of available options, finding means of achieving them at scale, and making them available to the user, all with due

regard for including all of the side-effects known to be important in normative terms. It is not permitted, to put the point summarily, to kill the patient in order to cure the cancer. It is possible, however, and desirable, to work out action sequences that can produce a given outcome indirectly, that can "set up" a situation in which a given action will lead to a preferred result.

The character of the required theory is worth underscoring, because it serves as one of the more serious limitations on the present capacity of the social sciences. A theory that is useful for guiding actions must in the first instance be able to project the effects of action on the future. A theory of that order can be used subsequently to suggest an action program (policy) for achieving a preferred future outcome. Such a theory *must* include, or assume, a causal connection between some set of two or more variables whose values are linked by rule. Otherwise, there could be no justification for acting on the pattern, nor could it be tested experimentally. A theory, then, will be reducible to the general form "Action A will produce outcome B under condition C", other things being equal. In a very strong discipline, logical compatibility with established theories may be considered adequate evidence to justify accepting a proposed new theory; in the social sciences, the supply of such theories is extremely small. Few if any of the structures commonly labeled "theories" are adequate for directing human actions, a fact that tends to be masked by general lack of awareness of the meaning of "apply". In this context, to "apply" means to calculate the implications of accepting a proposition or set of propositions, at least one of which must be generalized in form, and transferring those implications to the world of experience. Before an action can be said to "apply" a theory, it must be demonstrated that the action is logically required once the theory and other data or limiting assumptions have been accepted.

3) A set concepts is needed to show the normatively significant dimensions of each of the projected outcomes – a set of normative variables is essential. They will refer to conditions of life of the population

affected by the action. If the concepts incorporated into the theories used to make the projections are not adequate for normative purposes, which is very likely to be the case, then other instruments are needed that can translate them into acceptable normative terms. This can be a troublesome problem, as those who have struggled to assess the human significance of economic changes projected in terms of income data or the size of the gross national product can testify.

4) The preferred outcome within the set of available outcomes must be identified, and the preference justified. That requires an instrument in which the outcomes included in the set have been compared and ordered to show the preferred outcome – here labeled a "priority". If an established priority is already available, it can be used to make the choice; otherwise, an instrument must be created, and that can be a very formidable problem. For one thing, the priorities included in the overall normative system must be ordered transitively; second, development must proceed inductively, by generalizing solutions to specific choices problems. To complicate the task, the priority system as a whole, which is generalized in form, must be marked by "cut-off" points that identify outcomes regarded as either unimportant or of overwhelming significance. And since it is conceivable that *all* of the available outcomes may be either trivial or of great importance given the accepted normative system, the normative apparatus applied must be capable of identifying and dealing with such situations. Whether or not a particular outcome is preferable depends on a complex judgment of the relative desirability of the various outcomes or conditions that *could have been* produced, with due regard for the uncertainties attached to such predictions.

Obviously, that function cannot be performed unless some normative system is already in place. At a minimum, it will comprise all of the priorities created to deal with the various choices dealt with in the past. Taken collectively, those priorities amount to an overall ordering of the various conditions of life regarded as important in the accepted

ethical system. Such an overall structure, which is precisely analogous to the basic apparatus used to judge the quality of hogs at a county fair, provides a basis for arguing that one outcome is preferable to another, and a point of departure for arguing about the validity of the argument used to support that judgment. Such structures must be corrigible and therefore inductively grounded; they evolve over time out of real cases. Each application provides an opportunity to revise the judgement and the overall ordering. Learning how to correct the body of knowledge, empirical or normative, that must be accepted in order to make such corrections, is the most complex and hazardous aspect of systematic inquiry.

From a different perspective, the validity of a preference for one human situation rather than another is determined by the consensus of fully informed and competent persons – and by their practice. That is, if A is judged to be preferable to B, and the decision can be justified by pointing to a consensus within the community of informed and competent observers, that settles the issue – temporarily. Of course, such agreement requires prior acceptance of a common point of reference, a common set of fundamental assumptions (a theory of knowledge of the kind proposed here) by the "well-informed and competent," for precisely the same reasons that medical training is an essential component in an agreed diagnosis and treatment program for a particular patient. Agreement must refer both to conclusion reached and the reasoning used to reach it. If one farmer prefers A to B because it maximizes profits, while another prefers A to B because it produces a better-tasting product, they do not really agree on a preference. The reasons used to support the preference are part of the judgment.

5) Once the preferred outcome is identified and justified, either by applying an established priority, or by creating a new one, an action program or *policy* must be created that will produce it. Such policies are precisely equivalent to recipes in a cookbook, or to treatment programs in medicine. They are derived from the set of theories used to project

the content of the outcomes – because the side effects of the action taken to achieve an outcome must be included in the content of the outcome when preferences are being determined (again, to avoid killing the patient in order to cure the disease).

6) Since testability is essential if the overall apparatus is to be justified and improved out of experience, the preferred outcome must be a *logical* consequence of accepting the proposed action program – a requirement that is too often overlooked by those engaged in policy-making, both public and private.

7) A seventh requirement, not technically necessary for success, but essential in practical terms, should be added to list. Because it is very unlikely that any policy, whether it is produced and applied by an individual or by a collectivity, will function exactly as designed, or produce the anticipated results perfectly, a monitoring system should be installed that can keep track of the effects of applying it. That requirement is far more complex and stringent than appears at first sight because monitoring cannot be restricted to *anticipated* effects of the action. There must also be a way of capturing unanticipated but highly significant effects that may influence the decision on the next occasion when it must be made. In hospitals, the problem is resolved satisfactorily by using a trained human as a monitoring system in particularly dangerous situations. For monitoring social policies, there is no adequate mechanism available; even the kinds of trained observers who might be used to look for unwanted side-effects of action are almost nowhere to be found – mainly because the necessary intellectual apparatus has not been produced.

8) Integrity. One final precondition for success remains. The availability of knowledge means nothing; it must be known and applied. And if the application is lacking in either competence or integrity, the result can be disastrous – medical practice provides perhaps the most obvious illustration of the point. Precisely the same need is found in agriculture, or social science. The results of ignoring that aspect of

performance can be catastrophic, as illustrated very starkly by the terrible effects of having "extension agents" in Central America who were in fact employees of the fertilizer and pesticide corporations. The same requirement holds in principle for all forms of policy-making, whether individual or collective. The point is so obvious that it is commonly ignored or overlooked, but it has become one of the more serious problems facing the public (and the private) universities in contemporary industrialized society.

The loss of integrity within the ranks of academia in my own lifetime has become a matter for serious concern. If it continues, we may well arrive at a situation analogous to a world in which every physician is either incompetent, dishonest, or both. Where, under those conditions, would the consumer of medical services turn for help? That, if I am not mistaken, is probably the most critical problem facing society in the coming century, and a primary reason for the judgment that social science is presently unsuited to offer advice on policy matters. The conditions that make is possible for economists to argue both sides of nearly every question, and even for physicists, chemists, and other physical scientists to argue endlessly about questions relating to the effects of particular toxic agents on human health, or about the so-called "Greenhouse Effect", are only a reflection of the same very troublesome condition.

4. THE COMMUNITY

Turning to the other half of the proposed relation, the local (or the national) community, the conditions found there are such that if the members of the university faculty, and particularly the social sciences, could assist in important ways with community policy-making, their skills would not be used. That judgement is not based on simple discrepancies between the genuine and perceived needs of the community, though such confusions certainly occur. Nor is it a generalized statement about peculiar personal experiences. It flows instead from a

systematic analysis of the institutional framework, the set of folkways, mores, and habits of thinking, through which governments function. The analysis has been reinforced and illuminated by nearly two decades of experience working closely with government – first as a federal civil servant and later, as an unpaid "consultant" to both federal and local agencies.

To begin at the most general level possible, the fundamental assumption on which "democratic" societies tend to rely, that government is an instrument useful for the rational pursuit of the collective interest, hence that failures are only aberrations, must be rejected on the evidence thus far available. It is readily demonstrated that the political apparatus in the United States, local or national, simply is not designed for, or capable of, developing the kind of reasoned policies that the assumption implies. At the very least, that serves to intensify the effect of the intellectual inadequacies that characterize the universities. Indeed, it can be argued that existing institutional arrangements in most localities actually militate against, or even wholly preclude, any significant improvement of the policy-making apparatus or policy-making performance.

The perversity of the system of "separation of powers" has been sufficiently castigated not to require further justification here. It serves to render the most powerful political system on earth perhaps the most irresponsible as well. Further, it virtually eliminates one major possible solution to the problem of policy-making – improving the quality of the consumership among the general public – by reducing it to a pointless exercise. Over the long run, the essentially *reactive* character of the political apparatus at all levels – as distinguished from a purposive or directive government pursuing a well staffed or thought out action program – is far more important for the argument put forward here. Collective actions in a reactive system are determined almost entirely out of the interplay of competing interests. They are therefore highly dependent upon such factors as the level of resources available for spec-

ified purposes at different loci in the society, the relative strength of the organizations concerned with the pursuit of specific interests, the intensity of public reactions, relative media access, and so on. Such factors determine the amount of pressure that can be exerted on the political apparatus. Further, the extent to which the actions that create those pressures are "open", visible to anyone who cares to look, becomes increasingly important as the forces involved become more and more powerful. Finally, as with all reactive systems, the political apparatus is tuned, necessarily, to very short time spans, or has little or no capacity to sustain a line of action except in dire emergency – which also tends to be determined by the amount of pressure applied to the apparatus.

In the United States, the situation has been both complicated and made more urgent by recent trends that have not thus far attracted very much attention. First, in the decades from 1960 to 1980, the Federal government became an enormous centralizing force within the overall political system. Using its tax revenues as an inducement, it managed to convert nearly all of the state and local governments into a special kind of "drug addict", agencies that were "hooked" on Federal manna – which came to be regarded as cost free. The process produced massive dependence in a way that very closely paralleled the relation between the "grantsmen" of academic life and the granting agencies. That dependency meant an increased willingness to adopt any program that was funded from Federal resources and concurrent unwillingness to support any program that had to be underwritten solely or even mainly from local resources. A parallel process took place within the universities, where it became a primary cause of the serious decline in the integrity of the academic community. The result, in both local government and the university, was in some cases equivalent to a creating a hospital system willing to carry out cancer transplants to healthy patients in order to keep the operating rooms working full time. The collective and long-run costs of such practices were largely ignored. The

staffing of both local governments and public universities often lost all relation to both local needs and local capacities, and, in the case of the university, became in some cases almost completely divorced from student needs or regular budgetary resources.

When the national government changed direction in 1980, moving toward a policy of minimizing the role of *all* governments in the affairs of society, the instrument needed to enforce the program was already available in a highly dependent state and local government system. To an astonishing degree, considering the nature of the changes proposed and their social implications, the effort to reduce the role of government succeeded. In normative terms at least, that was a major social catastrophe – one whose effects should become increasingly apparent with time. For if the change is contrued as a choice between learning how to use government effectively, which was certainly an option at the beginning of the 1980s (or at any time previously), and minimizing the role of government, worldwide economic, social, and military conditions were hardly compatible with the choice actually "made" by default.

That is not to argue that centralization of decision-making or policy-making is necessarily or intrinsically correct. Indeed, pressed to extremes, centralization of policy-making is impossible, not because it will create an "anthill society", but because no central administration can deal competently with a heterogeneous population. It will, necessarily, treat the population as a homogeneous body, and that should, over time, tend to become a self-fulfilling ordinance. The reasoning is straighforward: if a policy is the rule that is applied to the particular cases, then policy cannot be made centrally in any meaningful sense. Such policies are "made" at the point of application to the particular case. The process of making policy focuses at a point where the specific implications of applying it can be foreseen, and that means in most cases it must be made from the bottom up. Which implications? The decision made on that point (on normative grounds, obviously) will determine the most effective point at which to make the policy.

The primary task of central government in most cases, is to constrain or limit the policy-making capacity of subordinate units. That requires a different kind of legislation than is the rule in most cases at present, and will depend absolutely on the development and application of adequate and systematic monitoring. That in turn will force the central government to spell out its intentions with respect to particular case, and not just aggregates, and a profound modification in legislative procedures will clearly be an essential, and again very unlikely, prerequisite to success.

Finally, it remains to deal with the traditional escape route from such policy-making dilemmas – having recourse to the general public, the wider community. In many areas of public affairs, that route has actually been sealed off by a combination of current practice and institutional failure in the past. The general public needs awareness, concern, and a channel for expression before the "sleeping giant" in all self-governing societies can play a decisive role in any particular area. Like most insomniacs, the longer it sleeps the deeper the sleep and the harder it is to waken the beast. In general, unless there is a special interest group involved with the issue, the general public will regard it with apathy or unconcern. The traditional conception of "the people" as a final court of appeal in social/political matters is, and always has been, meaningless – depending upon the vagueness of meaning of the term "final" for its acceptability. Whether the poor quality of public consumership is due to the failure of the media to fulfill its function in the community or whether both reflect the failure of the educational system to produce the kind of citizen body needed for self-government is moot. The present ineffectiveness of all three institutions is hardly open to question.

The quality of public consumership of public affairs is so poor that it effectively rules out reasoned discussion of complex and technical points in particular legislation. Indeed, it makes even local elections a charade, given the almost total absence of meaningful information for

voters to absorb – if indeed there were any signs of willingness on the part of the voters to expend the time and energy involved. The characteristics of the wider society apply very much in these areas. The principle "build a better mousetrap and the world will make a path to your door", though cherished, is only an illusion. It may be regrettable, but is nonetheless the case, that public relations expenditures are far more likely to generate product acceptance than expenditures that lead to genuine improvements in product quality. Nor does good information drive poor information from the marketplace of ideas, any more than real cures tend to eliminate patent medicines from the store shelves. Dependence on the "decent" people who are found in every part of government is not a viable alternative because they do not, for the most part, control governmental operations – and worse, because there is good reason to suppose that if control were handed over to them, they would not remain "decent" for very long. Lord Acton is worth taking seriously, whether the reference point is the integrity of university faculties or the behavior of government functionaries.

Other aspects of present day American government are equally disturbing. The trend to professionalization first noted by Nerle and Means in the direction of American corporations in the 1930s has spread, usually without notice or concern, to both national and to a lesser extent, to local government. For all practical purposes the citizenry have come to employ a set of mercenaries to operate their government – at a profit. And the power of position is now used systematically to maintain position, first and foremost. Here genuine learning has occurred, for the incumbents manage to remain incumbent with remarkable regularity. As with corporations, the change from community-based to professional direction has led to very fundamental changes in the set of norms and priorities used to make and justify decisions. And for our purposes, it is worth noting that an equally fundamental change has taken place in the way in which decisions are made, and in who can influence them. The role of the stockholder

altered significantly as the professionalization of business mangement proceeded; the same kinds of changes can be expected in the political arena, and the full consequences are unforeseable but in some respects already threatening.

Finally, it should be noted that various other social institutions – schools, families, and churches, among others – no longer fulfill their "traditional" roles in socializing the population, if indeed they ever did. The concept of "citizenship" remains unexamined; the triviality of the standard texts in "civics" is mute testimony to the failure of the intellectual community to take the notion seriously. Such conditions contribute to the creation of a readily governed, submissive population, but do little to increase optimism with respect to the future of reasoned policy-making in government – or to the contribution that social science can make to that activity.

To summarize, until some time well into the future, we can expect local policy-making to function under conditions of gross ignorance and uncertainty. If it could be assumed that there was a will to change, an impetus to placing operations on reasoned grounds (which is certainly not the case), policy-making would still have to be carried out under those conditions. The logic of policy-making under those circumstances is fairly clear. First, emphasis should move away from *making* policy, for, given ignorance of the kind that must be presumed, initial efforts at policy-making will almost certainly miss their intended mark and produce results that are at least partly different from those expected. What matters in that situation is the way in which policies are monitored, modified, and adapted.

Public authority seeking to improve its own performance therefore needs to concentrate initially on creating the institutional arrangements that make possible an evolutionary improvement in policy based on results achieved. Three points are essential: first, the normative purpose sought through the policy needs to be as clearly stated as possible, and in human terms; second, an adequate monitoring system must be

created, a way of producing an inventory of the conditions of life of the population that can be used to determine the effects of action; and third, the flow of information must be linked back to the policy-making apparatus, and attention to its content somehow enforced. How long it would take to establish such an apparatus will be apparent to anyone who has worked with governments as they presently function.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This all too brief summary of the necessary preconditions for reasoned and defensible policy-making, or direction of human actions, should clarify the line of reasoning on which the set of judgements being defended here depends. The present capacity of the university to assist the community in the conduct of its collective affairs, is very limited; the willingness of the community's rulers to be so assisted is equally restricted. It should be emphasized again that the minimal requirements for policy-making are not determined arbitrarily or casually; they are an analytic function of the purposes to be achieved through the use of knowledge and the limits on human capacity to fulfill those purposes. If these requirements cannot be met, human actions or the policies used to guide them cannot perform their required functions except accidentally.

In the course of the discussion, I have attended primarily to the reasons why the academic community in general, and social scientists in particular, cannot provide competent advice to policymakers, excepting a relatively few cases, and why better performance in the future is unlikely barring major changes in the universities – which seem most unlikely to occur. Few of the "theories" currently available in the social sciences can be applied or acted upon with confidence. Even fewer deal with humanly-significant phenomena, and therefore cannot satisfy even rudimentary normative criteria. The priorities needed for making significant choices are nowhere available, whether in social science or in contemporary moral philosophy or ethics. The "principles" that

philosophers produce and argue at great length are literally worthless for making real world decisions – they cannot be applied. To illustrate, even if it could be determined that one of the outcomes available for choice was "fair", which is presently a very dubious matter indeed, it would still be necessary to examine the other options to determine whether one or more of them were also "fair", and if that were the case, no decision could be made and defended – except, perhaps by flipping a coin. The conceptual apparatus needed for structuring the outcomes available for choice to show their normatively-significant dimensions is also unavailable, and unsought, either by social scientists or by moral philosophers.

Indeed, the set of structures and processes needed to establish a simple preference has not been so much as examined carefully. How else to account for the inordinate emphasis upon such constructs as "costs and benefits" or "utility", which imply some capacity to measure or weigh the elements included in two or more outcomes, when it is clear on the most preliminary kind of analysis that measurement of the essential normative variable (here labeled the "quality of life" or "condition of life") is impossible. Such concepts are complex configurations of elements and if some of the elements can be established fairly decisively, there is no possibility, now or in future, of producing a rule that will give a measure of the value of the overall variable based on the values taken by any finite set of its elements. Precisely the same problem faces the physician seeking to assess the "state of health" of a patient and compare it to an earlier state, or the art dealer seeking to estimate the value (not the price) of a painting. It is worth emphasizing that both functions *can* be performed, but some means of evading the measurement limitation is an essential prerequisite to doing so, and one not easily satisfied.

It remains to consider two additional features of contemporary social science that reduce even more the likelihood that the university, public or private, can assist the community with its policy-making in

any major way. The first has to do with the institutional arrangements found in most public universities. To begin, adequate criticism of proposed policies must deal with both their methodological and their substantive dimensions. Methodological competence is necessary, but not sufficient; the same limitation holds for substantive competence – which refers, very broadly, to having available the body of accumulated past experience with the phenomenon in question. That creates a major problem immediately for members of a university faculty: the commitment of time and energy needed for acquiring the substantive information needed for criticizing or applying policies, cannot be fitted into a normal academic career. Considering the amount of time required to train an experienced professional civil servant to a new position in the bureaucracy, which may run to well over a year, an inexperienced amateur, however well qualified in academic terms, would take much longer to acquire the necessary information. Yet without such familiarity, how could the person be expected to contribute to defensible policy-making within the organization?

The one-year faculty appointment in a major federal agency cannot provide a solution to this type of problem. The faculty member may improve his or her "qualifications" by remaining for a year, but barring evidence to the contrary, it must be assumed that the benefits are minimal to both academic and agency. For one thing, no administrator in full possession of his or her faculties would turn over an important administrative function to a person without experience who is scheduled to leave at the end of one year, particularly if the position entails significant policy-making linked to the agency's primary mission. Further, so long as the gross disparity between criteria of successful performance in government and in academia remains, so long as what is a significant contribution in one area can be denigrated and scorned in another, serious effort is likely to be rare. Unlike the agricultural expert, the social scientist cannot usually satisfy both masters using a common set of performance criteria. Even within the university, there is usually a

considerable tension between the "regular" departments and the various special institutes, bureaus, and other "policy-related" programs when appointment, promotion, and retention are being considered.

What role can university social science play in that kind of policy-making entreprise? First, unless there is a major shift in the criteria of achievement applied to university scholars, the possibilities are extremely limited. Policy-making will necessarily occur within government; it seems likely that the staffing function will also have to be located in the same place. There is no other site in which the necessary substantive information needed for working out real world implications can be acquired. For all practical purposes, the university will have two major roles in that context: first, to train staff personnel, generate the kind of intellectual competence, with respect to both empirical and normative affairs, that is needed for reasoned and defensible policy-making; second, to serve as a watchdog for the community, a monitoring agency whose information will be accepted as trustworthy by all sides. The latter point is particularly important if the staffing function is to be carried out within government, for the traditional problem there is keeping the game honest. Some institution must be created that can maintain the overall integrity of the political system. The university seems the only possible candidate for the task, combining as it (presumably) does intellectual competence with an abiding commitment to absolute integrity – which is essential for developing any kind of knowledge system. Within academia, absolute interdependence is unavoidable. That is why recent trends toward a decline in the level of commitment to rigid and rigorous standards are a matter of such great importance. Further, there will be a need for new institutional arrangements, and these will have to be designed in such a way that they reinforce the independence and impulse to integrity of the university rather than impugn it. All of which is very unlikely to happen, of course, but it is surely better to proceed in full awareness of the situation at hand, however dismal the prospects, trying to perform in

a meaningful way, measured by best knowledge, than to fail, chase a chimera, or continue along a route that is already charted to the brink of disaster and beyond. The intent of the present paper is to underscore the urgency of the situation; I cannot provide a solution – and I am not sanguine about the short-run possibilities ... nevertheless.

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ASA0425@TAUNIVM.BITNET or
ASA0425@TAUNIVM.TAU.AC.IL