The Richard M. Titmuss Memorial Lecture

"SOCIAL POLICIES AND MORAL PRINCIPLES"

Prof. David Donnison

Centre for Housing Research
University of Glasgow

Paul Baerwald School of Social Work
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Jerusalem June 1993

THE RICHARD M. TITMUSS MEMORIAL LECTURE

Richard M. Titmuss was appointed Professor of Social Administration at the London School of Economics in March 1950, a position which he held for the rest of his life, until 1973. He was one of the outstanding and original social scientists of his generation and in his research, lectures and personal encounters shaped anew the whole concept of social policy in Britain and abroad. For a period of three decades he exerted immense influence in scholarship, politics and government at home and in many countries throughout the world.

Richard Titmuss was a great friend of Israel and his thought and work very much influenced the study of social policy in Israel, and he left a lasting imprint on the social policies of the country. The lecture series in his memory has been made possible by the kind help of his friends in the United Kingdom, and by a generous grant from the National Insurance Institute of Israel.

David Donnison is Director of the Centre for Housing Research at the Univeristy of Glasgow, Scotland.

This Lecture was delivered at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work, Hebrew University of Jerusalem on May 4th, 1993.

SOCIAL POLICIES AND MORAL PRINCIPLES

A lecture to commemorate Richard Titmuss

David Donnison

There are people here who must have felt as I and my friends did on the day Richard Titmuss died. We thought of so many occasions, encounters and exchanges which would never happen again. It was for our own lost youth that we grieved. Although Richard was a Londoner through and through, it was in other countries - in Tanzania and Mauritius, for example, and not least in Israel - that his influence had been most telling(1). I am moved that you should wish to commemorate him here, and greatly honoured that you should have invited me to help you do so.

Everything that Richard wrote - everything he <u>did</u> - was shot through with a concern for human rights and the quality of human relationships. When I joined his young team at the London School of Economics in 1956 he was jokingly known in the back rooms as "God". But we were given no ten commandments, no explicit moral doctrines. He was a man who sought to civilise society, first by understanding it, and then, where necessary, by changing it - from the bottom up. His moral judgement informed that work but was not deployed, like a preacher's, from the top down. That, I shall argue, is often the best way to go about things. Indeed, I think that in talking to you today I am only clarifying some of Richard Titmuss' thinking and pushing it a few sentences further.

By what authority?

Where do we find the moral and political principles which entitle us to tell our fellow citizens how they should run their society? People used to look to their Gods for guidance of this kind. Many still do. No-one in this country needs to be reminded that fundamentalist faiths, claiming infallible knowledge of moral law and the right to enforce it with bloody sanctions, are riding high in many parts of the world.(2)

I have no wish to quarrel with those who believe in a God. The concept helps many to give meaning to their lives and a sense of direction to their society. Instead, I want to remind them that human beings fashion Gods to suit the needs of their times, constantly remaking them in new guises with new moralities as times change. Karen Armstrong has recently traced the subtler nuances of that process in her remarkable book, A History of God(3), but we can all recognise the broader patterns. The Gods of hunter-gatherer societies celebrated courage, strength and endurance. The transition to a society based on agriculture and the tending of livestock gave the mysteries of fertility, and therefore women, a central place in religion. Monotheism, celebrating a single, male God as law giver and judge of human interaction, came to power as the human race came to live and trade in cities. I asked, By what authority do we prescribe policies? The appeal to God does not answer that question; it reformulates it. For there are as many Gods as there are societies that need them.

Descartes believed himself to be an orthodox Christian, but the "enlightenment" of the eighteenth century - the movement of ideas with which his name is often associated - led people increasingly to seek moral guidance from scientifically ascertainable knowledge of an absolute kind which would be independent of religious and political ideologies. What the good society was and how it could be created they believed to be researchable questions which could be answered by experts. Dr. Johnson, writing his dictionary, summarises that confident view: "To philosophise" meant "to search into nature; to enquire into the causes of effects". The synonym of the word "philosophy" was "science". The philosopher David Hume shared this conviction, and the founding fathers of the United States of America, who had read his works, built their whole enterprise upon it.(4)

In the Western, capitalist world, two main strategies emerged for giving moral authority to political judgements. First, there were those who tried to formulate, not a description of the good society itself, but the procedures for creating one. They asked what rules intelligent, fair-minded people would adopt as the basis for a contract which would enable them to create the good society. Secondly, there were those who chose a prime value - something so important that it had to be the dominant characteristic of any society which could be described as good - and then asked how that value could be built into the society's arrangements. Both traditions are still with us.

Social contracts

The contract maker most often quoted today is John Rawls whose book, A Theory of Justice (5) invites us to join in a thought experiment by imagining how we would draw up a social contract if we were completely ignorant of the role which we ourselves are to play in the society to be created. In six hundred analytical pages he sets forth the full implications of a principle much like the one that most of us learnt at our mother's knee: the child who cuts up the cake is the last to choose a slice. A Rawlsian society would give every citizen a pretty equal share in its benefits. The only inequalities permitted would be those which benefit the poorest people.

Rawls' sharpest critic is Robert Nozick who attacks him for being so concerned with the division ofthe cake that he neglects to think about its production, so concerned with rights that he neglects duties, and so concerned with the future that he neglects past history which confers entitlements on people who feel they have laboured to produce what they own. Those entitlements form the basis of a stable society: Nozick's social contract would be based on them. Its fundamental principles he sums up in one forbidding sentence: "From each as they choose, to each as they are chosen".(6) If a temple is ever built to Margaret Thatcher, this text could well stand over its high altar.

My purpose in briefly reminding you of this argument is to point out that both these men stand within the same broad tradition. Their disagreement is really about the kind of society we live in and the kinds of men and women who inhabit it. Rawls' people are more

concerned about the distribution of good things and less concerned about property rights, more frightened of ending up amongst the poor and less hopeful of ending up amongst the rich. Neither of the societies envisaged seems to contemplate the possibility that growth may have to come to an end. Both are highly individualistic. People are assumed to make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits, for them, of different courses of action without much regard for the general quality of personal relationships between citizens in either society. Each of these Harvard professors was emphasizing different features and possibilities of the world in which they were writing: middle class America in the 1970s.

Neither of these writers recognises that human values and preferences are not unalterably "given" to us but depend significantly on the societies in which we live. They therefore change as those societies change. Bringing about changes in human values and preferences, as I shall show, may indeed be one of the main purposes of those who change social institutions and practices.

Prime values

Philosophers who nail their flag to the mast of prime values are also still with us. The most famous slogan of this kind - "Liberty, fraternity and equality!" - hoisted three prime values to the masthead. That should have warned us long ago of the dilemmas into which this strategy leads. Must choices be made between these good things? And if so, how? Whose liberty, fraternity, etc., is most important? How much liberty, etc., is enough?

Despite these daunting questions, this strategy now seems particularly to thrive in England. In his book, Violence for Equality, Ted Honderich asserts that "The Principle of Equality, if anything does, stands as self-recommending in moral thought."(7) Roy Hattersley, then deputy leader of the British Labour Party, picked liberty as prime value in his book, Choose Freedom (8). Back in the 1930s Richard Tawney, though he called his famous work Equality, was really most concerned about fraternity(9). Meanwhile, there are Conservatives who would reject all three of these candidates and choose quite different prime values. Robert Nisbet, writing in Against Equality - the most extensive British statement of an opposing view - says he would be reluctant "to declare any single virtue sovereign over all others". But if compelled to make a choice, "it would not be justice, however defined. More likely it would be protection or security, followed closely by conservation (in the sense of conservation of norms and ways of life)." (His italics.)(10)

Once again, I remind you of these arguments in order to show that they are fundamentally a disagreement, not about prime values, but about the kind of society we live in. Those of us who reject Nisbet's concern for security as a guiding light must recognise that his principles would seem appropriate to a lot of people in many parts of this dangerous world. They would have been appropriate, too, in seventeenth century Britain. But today security, as a prime value, falls short of the moral possibilities of the society we have inherited - inherited, thanks to the courage and political vision of our forbears who would feel that the basic freedoms they won for us should now

enable us to go further and aim higher. We should be honest enough to recognise, however, that in many parts of the world - and still in some parts of the United Kingdom - violence and disorder are so widespread that all of us would feel compelled to adopt something similar to Nisbet's priorities if we lived there. While there are people capable of keeping a compassionate love for all human beings alive, even in the face of appalling atrocities - the stories from the death camps celebrate these saints - most of us would find it very difficult to retain an overwhelming sympathy for the underdogs if one of them had just shot our wife or husband to death in front of our children. We would at least want to sort out a few other things before turning our main attention to redistributive social policies.

Needs

Another way of putting these points is to say that human needs change as society changes. Maslow offers us a hierarchy of five types of need, ranging from physiological survival to self actualisation, arguing that people cannot give serious attention to the latter until the former have been sufficiently satisfied (11).

Len Doyal and Ian Gough go further. In their important book, A Theory of Human Need(12), they reject Maslow's hierarchy, and offer instead a definition of "basic", "objective" and "universal" human needs which all societies should meet. This is prime value language: a claim to authoritative social prescription. That claim, I believe, goes a bridge too far. To advance it, Doyal and Gough have to define their "universal goals" and "basic needs" so broadly that they are

capable of being interpreted in various ways in different societies - as, indeed, they would have to be.

To find a way through these arguments, Richard Titmuss would have reminded us that, along with the liberty, the living standards and needs of individuals, we must also consider the character and quality of human relationships in a society, and the ways in which these help to shape and change people's values and aspirations.

A relativist morality

What I am offering you is a relativist philosophy. For every sociology there is a range of feasible moralities, for every morality a range of potential sociologies. Choices can be made: one does not precisely determine the other. But their economic and social environment goes far to shape the culture and moral principles potentially available to the people of any society. In seeking to defend or to change that society, some will work from the top downwards - preaching from general principles. Others, like Richard Titmuss, are happier working from the bottom upwards - confident that civilised social arrangements will make humane principles feasible. So long as they meet in the middle and make sense there, either starting point will do. But they are only starting points; neither is sufficient by itself.

Can this view be accepted? We have often been warned that we should not "relapse into mere relativism"; and there are relativists who have described their standpoint in ways which amply justify that

anxiety(13). But when the arguments are properly deployed it should be clear that it is precisely the fact that a moral principle is embedded in reality - rooted in a social environment and its evolving trends - that gives it authority.

How can we confer such authority on policy prescriptions? Not by investing them with a sanctity which precludes criticism but by exposing them to cross examination and seeing how they stand up to it. There are three kinds of questions we can put to the advocates of a policy. First, we can challenge the descriptions which they give us of the environment for which they prescribe, and also their forecasts and interpretations of future trends. Secondly, we can challenge the reasoning which they use to arrive at prescriptions for action. Thirdly, we can challenge the moral choices they make.

Those three kinds of challenge may, respectively, lead us to say: "You have got your facts wrong, neglected important facts, or misinterpreted those which you have used". Or, secondly, we can say: "You are being illogical and inconsistent within the terms of your own argument". Or we can say: "You should be ashamed of yourself!". Contract makers assert simple factual assumptions about society without bothering to demonstrate that they are valid, then rely on analytic argument to show where these assumptions would lead us. Exponents of prime values try to shame us into accepting their moral choices, without bothering to demonstrate that these are particularly fitting to the time and place they have chosen to discuss; then explain where these would lead us. Zealots and fundamentalists, being totally convinced that their own moral laws should bind everyone else, assert

rather than argue their point of view.

But relativists, who have to operate on all three levels of discourse, do not expect everyone to reach the same conclusions. Their arguments leave room for honest disagreement, and help to clarify where exactly those disagreements lie. They should examine other people's moral preferences with respect but recognise that they are choices, not trump cards in a philosophical game, and may therefore have to be rejected: the Nazis, too, believed they were morally justified. If their own arguments are accepted relativists gain extra authority from the fact that they are expected to be convincing at all three levels, empirical, analytical and moral.

We organise University work in a way which makes it virtually impossible to bring these three kinds of discourse together. The contribution made to political debate by the social sciences is largely concerned with the first, empirical part of the discourse and divided up amongst different disciplines and departments - economics, politics, sociology and so on - which may not communicate much with each other. Academic philosophy is mainly confined to the second kind of discourse - logical and analytical. And no-one is supposed to say "You should be ashamed of yourself!" in a seminar. Yet on some occasions that may be the only fitting thing to say.

I offer you a thought experiment to explain my argument. Imagine yourself standing in a crowded room in a foreign country. You have no idea who the people standing around you are or what brought them there. One more person enters the room, and someone next to you says "He's

good!" Nothing more.

How could you respond? "Good at what?" you might ask. All you have been offered is a noise of approval, almost meaningless by itself.

But then you learn that you are standing in the midst of ...shall we say, an orchestra, preparing to play in a concert? Or a local association of farmers? Or a group of racing drivers? Name the institution and its practice (orchestras and the playing of music, for example) and the criteria for evaluation of the performance of individuals and groups become very clear. Established institutions with highly developed practices make evaluation possible.

That does not mean that there can be no disputes about such assessments. The point of my experiment is, not that it would provide infallible judgements about every practice, but that we have for each a tradition, based in the relevant practice and its institutions, which we can draw upon to discuss such questions, and experts who know a lot about the tradition and are capable of arguing with each other in ways which educate us.

Such evaluations, once agreed, do not remainn unchanged for the rest of time. Take the farming example: as we have learnt more about the side effects of pesticides and fertilisers, about the scope for organic farming, about the need for sustainable forms of agriculture which will not destroy the environment on which we all depend, so farming practice and our definitions of a "good" farmer have changed.

Such changes can be brought about by reasoned analysis and prescription from the top downwards. We tell people "Don't smoke!", for example. Or they can be brought about by changing the environment from the bottom upwards - taxing tobacco so that people will be persuaded to become non-smokers, for example.

Earlier sources of moral authority, whether derived from God, from social contracts or from prime values, promised absolute, universal, unchanging guidance. When they failed to deliver, their devotees felt lost and betrayed. Such failures are bound to occur in turbulent times. People then tend either to withdraw from contention or to seek moral refuge in zealotries which preclude rational argument. W.B. Yeats, writing at a time when his own country was passing through such a period, captured the two responses perfectly: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; ....The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."(14) To a relativist, however, all these sources of moral authority can only provide principles which are rooted in a particular society at a particular point in time. There is no other kind of principle. While that may seem a weakness, we can draw strength from it. For if our principles are derived from a robust, relevant and living tradition we must expect them to be constantly disputed and constantly evolving. They need to be, because the society which they must help us to cope with is itself evolving(15).

We would expect the citizens of Israel to find themselves in a time of moral transition today. To create the state and defend it had

to be the tasks of the first generation. To build a tolerant civil society that respects and welcomes all the cultures - Jewish and non-Jewish - which have made their home in this amazing land may now be the only way of building securely upon the foundations laid by that first generation. Such a radical shift in political aspirations is bound to provoke fierce dispute. But disputes of this kind, if successfully resolved, can be the crucible in which a new morality is defined and hardened.

We have no difficulty with this kind of thinking when making aesthetic judgements. It makes sense to argue about the comparative merits of different artists of the impressionist school: painters working within one tradition in similar societies. But it makes no sense to ask whether Michelangelo's marbles are better or worse than the best nineteenth century Benin bronzes from Nigeria. Different economies with different cultures in which artists used different materials for different purposes call for quite different kinds of evaluation. Our judgements must be related to the settings in which the artists worked. Moral judgements are more like aesthetic judgements than like acts of faith, legal contracts, mathematical proofs or scientific discoveries.(16)

The essentially similar character of aesthetic and moral judgements was aptly illustrated by Avishai Margalit in an essay called "The Kitsch of Israel"(17). Kitsch is based on widely recognised symbols which evoke easy emotion without difficult thought. Every nation has them. The image of the Israeli soldier at the Wailing Wall, seen on postcards in many parts of this city, is a local example.

Social policies

I have talked about particular practices - music, farming, painting. But can we reason in the same way about anything so complex as a whole society - a society, moreover, which is constantly changing in ways that create new needs and preferences, making new values possible? By changing its arrangements we may help to create new moral values. But who is then to say which are best? This is a more formidable version of the old index number problem which they taught us about in first-year statistics. Are we to measure changes in average prices by basing them on the basket of goods bought last year or the different basket of goods bought this year? It complicates the issue even further when price changes and other influences upon people's motives are introduced with the deliberate intention of changing their values - changing the basket of goods which they wish to buy. Later, the voters' acceptance of the new policy may be a kind of self-fulfilling prophesy, engineered by the impact made on society by the policy itself.

Policy making is a daunting task - Godlike even - for in changing a society we are, for better or worse, helping to create new kinds of human beings with new values. But the relativist standpoint teaches us that these changes will happen whether we play a part in the process or not. Anthropologists whose job is to observe and explain, but not to prescribe, may feel that they can opt out of the argument. But policy analysts know that if they decline to prescribe someone else will be happy to do so, and they will then have scant reason to complain if

they do not like the outcome. So they have to try.

I will show how this kind of evaluation may work. Although we can learn a great deal from the experience of other countries, political prescriptions can only be applied to a particular place and time. That's what relativism means. The United Kingdom in 1993 is the case I am best equipped to evaluate. However, I can offer you here only an outline of the much longer argument such an evaluation requires.

First the empirical evidence: we need an understanding of the country's present position and likely future. Throughout the more advanced capitalist economies of the Western world there used to be a tendency for the basic distributions of incomes and wealth (before taxes and benefits are taken into account) to grow slowly more equal(18). Twenty years ago - about 1972 - that trend was reversed. For reasons which the economists are still arguing about, the basic distributionn of pre-tax, pre-benefit incomes has since then been growing more unequal. There are more people working in insecure, low paid jobs; more people are unemployed; and more of the unemployed are out of work for very long periods. (Wealth distributions are more complex: they depend on how you treat housing and pension rights.) This is a change of historic importance, and Britain shares fully in it, along with its neighbours.

The change has political implications. As people in the middle reaches of the economy have found their job prospects and their wages threatened, they have defended themselves at the cost of poorer people with less political power. In Britain we have had massive changes in

taxes and in benefits, particularly during the 1980s, and both have taken money from the poorer half of the population and given money to the richer half, thus exacerbating the basic economic trends(19).

These political processes work in many different ways, operating through institutions of the Left as well as the Right. Cuts in social services are levied mainly on the services which poorer people depend on: public housing and benefits for the unemployed, for example. A whole language is created to justify this, using phrases about "the underclass", "welfare dependency" and the like - phrases which suggest that the poor are responsible for their own plight. Expenditure is switched from direct provision of services to tax reliefs on private spending - a switch which transfers money to those who pay the higher rates of income tax. Trade Unions and employers both turn away from any attempt to negotiate central guidelines for wage settlements, and that tips the balance of bargaining power in favour of the strongest. Despite their generally poor performance on the world stage, the top people in our private enterprises have consistently awarded themselves bigger increases in income than the rest of the nation has secured. Meanwhile, wages Councils, set up to protect the lowest paid workers, are being abolished.

Then, when excessive wage increases, coupled with poor productivity and excessive, debt-financed personal consumption produce inflation and the inevitable crisis in Britain's balance of payments, the Government's policy responses operate by throwing more people out of work. Unemployment, and the fear of it which spreads through the lower reaches of the labour market, have become our principal

instruments for managing the economy. Rising unemployment, our Chancellor of the Exchequer told us last year, is "a price well worth paying" to bring the economy under control: and so it is, for those in secure jobs.

There has been growing segregation of the poorest people within our cities, concentrating them in neighbourhoods where there are large numbers out of work and large numbers of lone parents, mostly living on social security payments. These excluded neighbourhoods are starved of investment by the private as well as the public sector. At the bottom of the labour market news about jobs is picked up by word of mouth from relatives and neighbours. If all your family and friends are out of work you are excluded from this network of gossip. Thus more and more people in these neighbourhoods drop into the sump of the long-term unemployed who may never find a way back into the engine rooms of the economy. That helps to produce the ratchet effect which means that when the economy revives the numbers out of work never fall to the previous low level; then, when unemployment starts rising again at the beginning of the next recession it rises from a higher base level than the previous one.

If poverty is defined as life on an income which is less than 50 per cent of the average within your own country, then Britain has had a greater increase in poverty than any other country in the European Community. That growth in poverty has been loaded mainly onto families with dependent children: low wage earners, unemployed people and lone parents(20).

Do these divisions matter? Although the living standards of the poor have risen less than those of the rest of the population, they do continue, slowly, to rise. Growing inequality matters because it makes a measurable impact on behaviour and life chances - an impact which ultimately affects everyone.

In Britain, unpaid debts, repossessed homes, homelessness among young people and other signs of stress afflicting the family have all been increasing. Average life expectations of men and women in the prime of life have fallen: a historic change in trends. Richard Wilkinson's work(21) has shown that in the richer countries of the world it is the distribution, not the level, of incomes and living conditions which shapes health and life expectations. The shortfall which arises in the more unequal societies runs right up to the sixtieth percentile from the bottom. Adapting a well-known warning about tobacco, we can say to most of our fellow citizens, "Inequality damages your health".

Disorders of various kinds follow. Crimes against property, which account for the bulk of our recorded offences, rise with rising unemployment - dramatically in recent years. Many forms of addiction have been increasing. Schools in impoverished areas report that they are having growing difficulties in maintaining civilised behaviour.

These stresses affect all of us. As taxpayers we all contribute to the massive increase in social security benefits for the unemployed, and to the costs of an increasingly expensive health service. We are all affected by crime or the fear of it, by unemployment or the fear of

it, by higher insurance premiums and policing costs, and by the growing costs of prisons and other penal services.

So why do people vote for those who lead them in these directions? I turn next to the political trends which are both a cause and an effect of these social changes. A situation is being created - particularly in the fields of housing and pensions, but with the first signs of similar developments in education and health care - in which people feel compelled to buy their way out of public services into the best private alternatives which they can afford. Instead of standing shoulder to shoulder with their fellow citizens to improve public services which we all depend on, they come to see these, and the people who use them, as a burden on taxpayers like themselves. It is pretty clear that some members of the Government, and some of the courtiers who advise them, intend that this should happen. It paves the way for a more drastic assault on the welfare state.

Religions

What part does religion play in these developments? Christianity has for generations been a declining force in the nation's affairs, but that does not mean that the British have any less need for a religion. All societies need a set of general ideas which give meaning to individual and social life, rooting their citizens in a past (a mythical past, very likely), giving them a sense of direction and hope for the future, and offering a morality - a means of evaluating actions, people and communities. For many Israelis, Zionism was such a religion; the kibbutzim its monasteries(22).

In Britain, many of the political class have turned to a crude form of economics as a new religion. It fulfills all these functions. Like other religions, it focuses attention very effectively on some problems while making it difficult even to discuss others. Like all religions, it is a vulgarised form of the founders' ideas. Adam Smith, after all, was a Professor of Moral Philosophy and wrote a long book on The Theory of Moral Sentiments before he turned to The Wealth of Nations. Considered simply as a professional discipline, the power of economics has long seemed puzzling. It has not enabled its practitioners to forecast economic trends reliably or to manage the economy successfully. But those are not the purposes of a religion. Viewed in that light, it works pretty well, explaining - morally, not scientifically - how the world goes, conferring approval on those who win wealth in competitive markets and justifying the poverty ofthe losers, both on an individual scale and on an international scale. "From each as they choose, to each as they are chosen". It is based on folk tales of a mythical Eden - the perfectly competitive free market. It claims to have defeated and scattered the foreign hosts which once threatened the West. It has its high priests who communicate with each other in private languages and arcane symbols. It has its warring sects and its holy places - in the lecture rooms of the Universities of Chicago and Pennsylvania, and in the corridors of the World Bank and the I.M.F.

Some conclusions

The picture of Britain which I have presented is a gloomy one for progressives. It omits many gallant initiatives which are opening up new and more creative possibilities - many of them supported by agencies of the Government itself. The reality is more complicated than I have had time to show. Nevertheless the main trends are clear.

Basic economic changes are dividing our society. These divisions are exacerbated by political processes bringing about changes in taxes, benefits and many other arrangements, and the segregation of poorer people in unattractive, poorly served neighbourhoods. We start imposing exclusion upon the rising generation before they are out of their cradles: the growing numbers in poverty consist mainly of families with dependent children. A "two-thirds/one-third" society is emerging. The growing gulf between those in the mainstream and those excluded on the margins degrades and damages all of us. As in many other parts of Europe, there are signs that people are scapegoating minority out-groups of various kinds as they seek out someone whom they can blame for their distress. Meanwhile, for the complacent, these trends are justified by a religion of the free market. As young members of his team in the 1950s, we used to smile at Richard Titmuss's suspicion of economists. Some of us had been educated by economists, and we knew there were intelligent, humane and progressive people among them. If he were still with us, I think Richard would feel that his forebodings had been justified.

Many, I think, would agree that the basic characteristics of a

better world to which this analysis points are clear enough. It would be a world in which all people are treated with equal respect; and therefore a world in which preventable human suffering is prevented and curable suffering cured; and therefore, too, a world in which those now excluded can gain a hearing - a voice in their counntry's affairs which cannot be neglected - for while they remain powerless they will never find a way into the mainstream of their society. It would also have to be a world which accepts and respects all traditions - all races, cultures and religions - provided they extend a similar tolerance to others. We have the resources to create such a world: it would be politically difficult, but not economically impossible.

All that is easily said; but how do we get there? And what help can we, as students of social policy, offer to those who want to get there?

Academic implications

Rational argument and scientific research do not, by themselves, change the world. Existing regimes and their ruling ideas are fiercely defended and to bring about major changes in them they must first be discredited. That usually calls for a period of turbulence which cannot be engineered or precisely foreseen. All we know is that in increasingly unequal societies such periods will come again. The Marxists are essentially right in asserting that social change comes about through conflict.

But the collapse of a regime or its ruling ideas only provides an

opportunity for change - an opportunity which will not be constructively used unless there are convincing plans, already in the minds of many people, for making the world a better place. Turbulence, by itself, may only lead to chaos or Fascism. The rational, "Fabian" conviction that social reform calls for long years of carefully monitored experiment, systematic analysis and evaluation, and widespread public education is also right.

Small changes in policy - some of them useful - take place all the time under regimes of every kind. But if it is major change that you seek, then our role as academics - a modest but potentially important one - is to help in building up and disseminatinng the bank of tried and tested ideas which every society needs for the day when its politicians look urgently for new policies and programmes to replace those which have been discredited(23). You know well the kind of work required: many of you are doing it. But the ideas I have offered may suggest further themes for research and teaching.

We should have a better understanding of needs, the ways in which an advancing economy creates new needs, and the ways in which its political processes exacerbate these by making it harder for the powerless to meet them. Such research will show how each generation, while growing collectively richer, reinvents poverty in new forms. It will thereby clarify the case for a relative definition of poverty, while also suggesting how the numbers who suffer from it can best be reduced.

We should have a clearer understanding of the ways in which

poverty policies will be affected by a world in which growing populations struggle for finite resources - a world in which every game increasingly assumes a "zero-sum" character.

We know a lot about the ways in which moral and political values shape policy and practice, but much less about the ways in which policy and practice shape moral and political values. To take a crude example: the British Conservatives' determination to privatise public housing and Labour's initial determination to resist that policy arose partly from their shared conviction that public tenants vote Labour and home owners vote Conservative. Were they right? If so, why - and what did these votes mean to the people concerned?

Institutions, practices, traditions - these, along with the myths and symbols which they create and sustain, are key terms in the analysis I have offered you. How do they work in the fields which most concern us? What are the institutions, practices and traditions which build a nation? Can it be a nation that respects and cares for <u>all</u> its citizens? In Israel the Hebrew language, the schools and the Army are clearly seen by many as an answer to the first of those questions; yet they also divide the wider nation which lives within your boundaries. Is there any answer to the second question?

How can excluded group build institutions, practices and traditions of their own which give them dignity and a respected place in the wider society? Under what circumstances will the dominant groups allow them to do so?

Political implications

Already these questions lead into political analysis. In these closing minutes I shall speak to you as much as to my own countrymen. For mine is not the only country where many people have reason to feel excluded from mainstream opportunities; exploited, impoverished, humiliated and powerless; their own talents and their children's stunted and wasted. It is not the only country where such injustices are often based on race and religion; and where these divisions are growing deeper and provoking lawlessness, violence and terrorism. It is not the only country where there are neighbourhoods in which respect for law disintegrates and noone is prepared to seek help from, or give help to, the police. These patterns are to be seen in many parts of the world.

There is no magic prescription for solving these problems. But I believe we know something about the route we have to travel. How do excluded people escape from powerlessness and humiliation? Can they do that without resorting to violence and crime which degrade and destroy the society they seek to enter? These are the central problems.

Whether we consider them as individuals or as communities, the people who are excluded from the mainstream of our societies tend to stand somewhere on a ladder of responses which has been described by Kay Carmichael in her book, <u>Ceremony of Innocence</u>(24). At the worst, they are sunk in apathy: incapable of doing anything. But they may move on to depression: a pretty poor state, you may think, but at least they feel pain, and they don't like it. To emerge from depression they

have to pass through anger. They become very difficult to deal with, but there is no way round this potentially hopeful phase. Then there comes a critical junction on the route. They may move to delinquency: car stealing, burglary, drug dealing - destructive acts, but at least a positive attempt to take their fate into their own hands, common among people who see no legitimate way of doing that. Or they may move into protest and political action: petitions, demonstrations, riots... Sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference between these alternative routes: one man's "freedom fighter" is another man's "terrorist". But if they take the protest road successfully, learn to negotiate with their oppressors and find that they can gain a hearing, they move on to more creative action - political, economic and social. They cannot achieve that unless they win some power from dominant groups in their society who will not concede it willingly.

N.S. Ateek's book, Justice and Only Justice, describes this process and reminds us how long it can take. "Within a forty-year period, Palestinian Arabs in Israel have moved from humiliation and shock to despair and resignation and on to raised consciousness and awakening. ...From a people robbed of its very identity to one that has regained it."(25)

I have given this story an optimistic scenario, tracing the ascent from apathy to creativity which many of us have witnessed, both in individuals and in communities. But pessimistic scenarios also occur - indeed they can be brought about by hostile or incompetent authorities. Protesting individuals and communities can be driven back through anger innto depression and apathy or diverted into delinquency and violence

by agencies which repress or neglect them. In South Africa today we see a society hovering on the brink of these different possibilities. In Israel too perhaps? If people relapse into sullen apathy they may, for a while, seem less troublesome to the dominant social groups and their instrument, the state. But their capacity for anger and revolt do not go away. There are people in Northern Ireland who have been waiting six hundred years for that to happen.

Once the divisions which mark my counntry and yours have gone far enough they begin to corrupt the whole society. If we use high and fluctuating rates of unemployment to manage the economy we impose costs on the social security system which compel governments to abandon universal benefits that build a sense of shared citizenship, and to rely instead on means-tested social assistance for the poor and tax-funded private pensions for the rich - policies which divide society and destroy the original principles of the social security system itself. Then, if violence and disorder develop, our young people get drawn into the corrupting pressures of an imperialist society - in the army, in the police, as journalists working for censored media, and in other ways.

We cannnot find a way out of these dilemmas without political leadership of a high order operating at scales ranging from the local to the national. The private sector has to be involved as much as the public sector. Those capacities can rarely be found without encouragement and pressure from international sources. And not only in Bosnia. If the British eventually succeed in getting things right in Northern Ireland, that achievement will owe a good deal to people in Dublin and Washington. If they begin to take the needs of low paid

workers, lone parents and the unemployed more seriously, this will owe a good deal to standards being established elsewhere in the European community.

Once the political processes of negotiation have been convincingly set in motion, all public services must play a part in healing the rifts: education, training and employment services; the police and the military; housing, social security, and the social and community work services; the private sector as well as the public. To each we must say: if you are not going to be part of the solution, then you will be part of the problem. But that is a subject for other lectures.

What hope have we of achieving these things? Richard Titmuss would say that we have to keep trying.

Notes

(1) I tried to say these and more things in an obituary which appeared in New Society, April 12, 1973, p. 81.

(2) Ernest Gellner's book, Postmodernism, Reason and Religion, London, Routledge, 1992, provides a revealing account of the social roots and political functions of fundamentalism in Islamic countries. He would, however, be critical of the relativist argument I have presented here.

(3) Karen Armstrong, A History of God, London, Heinemann, 1993.

(4) For an introduction to this political annd philosophical history, see Douglass Adair, "That Politics May be Reduced to a Science", Chapter 19 in Donald W. Livingston and James T. King (eds.), Hume: a Re-evaluation, New York, Fordham University Press, 1976.

(5) John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972.

(6) Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia, Oxford, Blackwell, 1974, p. 168.

(7) Ted Honderich, Violence for Equality, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980, pp. 55-56.

(8) Roy Hattersley, Choose Freedom, London, Michael Joseph, 1987.

(9) Richard Tawney, Equality, London, Allen and Unwin, 1931.

(10) Robert Nisbet, "The Pursuit of Equality", Chapter 4 in William Letwin (ed.) Against Equality, Macmillan, 1983, p. 133.

(11) A Maslow, Motivation and Personality, New York, Harper and Row, 1954.

(12) Len Doyal and Ian Gough, A Theory of Human Need, London, Macmillan, 1991.

(13) See, for example, passages quoted by Doyal and Gough (A Theory of Human Need p. 33) from P. Feyeraband (Science in a Free Society, New Left Books, 1978) and others.

(14) W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming", Collected Poems, London, Macmillan, 1950.

(15) Readers of Alasdair MacIntyre's books (After Virtue, London, Duckworth, 1981, and Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, London Duckworth, 1988) will appreciate how much I owe to his thinking.

(16) For a review of the literature on aesthetics and the philosophy of art, see Albert William Levi and Ralph A. Smith, Art Education, A Critical Necessity, University of Illinois Press, 1991.

(17) Avishai Margalit, "The Kitsch of Israel", New York Review of Books, 35, 24 Nov. 1988, p. 23; quoted in Marc H. Ellis, Beyond Innocence and Redemption, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1990, pp. 33-34.

(18) Henry Phelps Brown, The Inequality of Pay, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977.

(19) John Hills, (ed.) The State of Welfare, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990.

(20) Carey Oppenheim, Poverty: The Facts, London, Child Poverty Action Group (1-5 Bath St., ECIV 9PY).

(21) Richard Wilkinson, "National Mortality Rates: The Impact of Inequality?", American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 82, No. 8, August, 1992; p. 1082.

(22) Kay Carmichael, Ceremony of Innocence, London, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 180-81.

(23) I have developed these arguments further in the last Chapter of my book, A Radical Agenda, London, Rivers Oram Press, 1991.

(24) Naim Stifan Ateek, Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation, New York, Mary Knoll, Orbis, 1989, pp. 9-10; quoted in Marc H. Ellis, op. cit., p. 127.