Interpretive social science and morality

By Nicoletta Stame

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At a moment when moral issues are increasingly relevant to the life of our societies (growing inequalities worldwide, environmental damage, renewed imperialistic policies, terrorism and wars) the question of the place of morality in social science is once again on the agenda. Forty years ago, the same question was raised for the first time by the group of social scientists, from different disciplines, who had converged on the idea of "interpretive social science" as practiced at the School of Social Science at the Institute of Advanced Study (Princeton). Under the intellectual influence of Clifford Geertz and Albert Hirschman[1], these authors openly dared to challenge an omission that was imprinted in the very origins of their disciplines. This episode of responsible creativity still speaks to our current predicaments.

"Interpretive social science" was a reaction to mainstream social science as it had developed in the '60s and '70s, with its positivistic tenets of value-freedom, "objectivity" and the detachment of the researcher. It aimed to "criticize and refine the prevailing theories and methodologies of the human sciences (characterized by) overspecialization, present-mindedness and unwarranted scientism without much compensating capacity to provide satisfactory solutions to the pressing social and economic problems of the day" [2]. "Interpretive social science" was a plea for a more modest approach to reality that included understanding the meaning of social action before trying to explain its causes, developing middle range theories and remaining open to new discoveries, and a sense of moral commitment by the researcher, who is part of the research. In Geertz's words: "As 'interpretivists', self-declared and self-understood, we were interested in work that reached beyond the narrowed confines of a fixed and schematized 'scientific method', one that connected up with moral, political, and spiritual concerns" (2001: 8).

Indeed, "interpretive social science" does not limit itself to appreciating subjective values without fearing the charge of relativism, but aims to submit values, meanings, behaviors to a sound analysis. This is implicit in the way these social scientists addressed a question that had no relevance in mainstream social science: "what is morality that should guide social science?". In the words of Bellah et al. (1983: 17), "at stake is the issue of how empirically described life and ethical vision can be brought into relation".

My aim is to reconstruct how morality became an important topic within "interpretive social science", overcoming its exclusion from positivist epistemology, by examining the ways in which this exclusion had come about: the object of research was defined as "facts, not values", the goal of research as "descriptive, not normative", the attitude of the researcher as "detached, not involved". Ethical considerations were therefore considered the realm of the humanities, not the sciences. Geertz first, and then the other authors who identified themselves as interpretive social scientists, contested these dichotomies: they considered together the various spheres of life and of inquiry that both positivist social science and hermeneutic philosophy, each for their own good reasons, wanted to keep separate[3]. Actually, these authors did not feel at ease in these paradigm wars, nor in the company of such strong dichotomies (scientism vs. subjectivism).

Overview

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[1] On the School of Social Science at the Institute of Advanced Study (IAS) at Princeton, see my note in http://colornihirschman.org/article/long-is-the-journey-n1/the-school-of-social-science

[2] School of Social Science: 7. The document "Our idea of a social science" was prepared for fund raising. It was written by Quentin Skinner and William Sewell under the supervision of Albert Hirschman and Clifford Geertz.

[3] Geertz, in *Available Light* (2000: 145) criticizes the schematic opposition between the natural and human sciences posited by the hermeneutic philosopher Taylor, the idea that between them there is a gulf, a dichotomy instead of a mere difference. While praising Taylor's contribution to defending the integrity and vitality of the human sciences (including sociology) from the attacks of positivism, Geertz criticizes him for not having distinguished ruptures and discontinuities within the natural sciences.

What does it mean to say that "social scientific research is a variety of moral experience" (Geertz, 2000: 23)? This relates to what morality is understood to be, as well as to how to deal with it within one's field of research.

Two types of content are attributed to morality in this literature. On the one hand is understanding the meaning people attribute to their actions – that is, their mores ("persons are moral agents, they question themselves and take responsibility for the stances they adopt", Sullivan, 1983: 306). On the other , there is defining what it is to live a human life (Sullivan, 1983: 304). These two types of content may refer to both the object of research and the attitude of the researcher.

Given the pervasiveness of the "amoral" stance in all social disciplines, there can be no single way of combining morality and social science. Among the interpretive social scientists two main strategies can be detected:[4]

- Recognizing that ethical orientations have always been present in scientific research, although in disguise, and exposing them : "ethical orientations are present, disguised or not, everywhere in the enterprise of social science" (Bellah et al. 1983: 8).
- Keeping the tension between the two poles of these oppositions open. This is what Bellah calls "to criticize the weaknesses of modern thought from within its own assumptions" (ibid: 9).

In what follows I will examine how four social scientists tackled the topic from the standpoint of their own disciplines (anthropology, sociology, economics, political science), thus helping to create a space for morality inside a social science better equipped at addressing the problems of the day.

I will present the position of each author with reference to :

- The relationship between morality and social research
- how to understand moral issues: mores vs. ethical values
- main topic tackled: the object of research vs. the relationship researcher/subject
- strategy for dealing with the topic: keeping the opposition open vs. exposing what already exists.

At the end I will draw some comparisons among them.

Clifford Geertz

In 1968[5] Clifford Geertz wrote an essay entitled "Thinking as a moral act: ethical dimensions of anthropological fieldwork in the New States"[6] that started by quoting Dewey, whose thought is synthesized in the sentence: "thought is conduct and it is to be morally judged as such" (2000: 21).

In that essay Geertz affirms that social science research, contrary to the tenets of the "scientific method" and of the "detached observer" – is a moral experience :

> "methods and theories of social science are not being produced by computers but by men and women(…) operating not in laboratories but in the same social world to which the methods apply and the theories pertain" (22). "social research (is) a form of conduct" and "implications (should) be drawn for social science as a moral force" (23).

Geertz discusses two instances of the ethical dimensions of anthropological fieldwork, his own scientific domain and one that has found its *raison d'etre* in the age of imperialism. He exposes the personal dilemmas

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4 These are among the strategies identified by Bellah et al. (1983: 15) in the "Introduction" to *Social Science as Moral Inquiry*. Referring to the various chapters in that book, they dismiss a third way of approaching the topic, the "deconstructionist strategy", which is a complete rejection of the whole problematic: "those in the deconstructionist position view power and knowledge as so closely related that one cannot deal with one without dealing with the other" .

5 At that time he had not yet met Hirschman, but had quoted the latter's work on development (*Strategy of Economic Development*)

6 Now in Geertz (2000). The quotes that follow come from this edition.

of the researcher and criticizes the way they have usually been kept under control by what he mocks as the anthropologist's "vocational stoicism".

The first instance refers to "the imbalance between the ability to uncover problems and the power to solve them"(37): one is often confronted with dilemmas like choosing between the different effects of an intervention, and it is useless to pretend that social scientists are uninterested in their moral implications.

The example concerns agrarian reform. This is a recalcitrant problem, which Geertz has analyzed in Indonesia and Morocco:

> "In both situations (there is) a radical short-run incompatibility between the two economic goals which together comprise what agrarian reform in the long run consists of: technological progress and improved social welfare. (…) In Indonesia,(…) this contradiction expresses itself in terms of an extraordinarily labor-intensive, but, on the whole, highly productive mode of exploitation. (…) Technological progress of any serious scope (…) means the massive displacement of rural labor, and this is unthinkable under the present conditions "(25).
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> In "the Moroccan situation (…) there is a split between large-scale (…) modern farmers and very small-scale four- and five-acre traditional dirt farmers". The dilemma that it presents distinguishes between, on the one hand, a continuation of the situation which "over and above its social injustice, (is) not one that is likely to endure very long in the post-colonial world, and indeed has now already begun to alter. On the other, a disappearance of such farmers and their replacement by small peasants threatens (…) a fall in agricultural output and foreign exchange earnings which(…) cannot (be) regarded with equanimity" (27).
>
> Apparently both countries have 'chosen' "higher levels of rural employment over economic rationalization". But "this sort of 'choice' is, for all its welfare attractions, a most dubious one, given a physical setting where advanced techniques are necessary not just to prevent the decline of output but to avoid a progressive deterioration of the environment to levels for all intents and purposes irreversible" (27).

Observing that "technological progress and improved social welfare pull very strongly against one another; and the more deeply one goes into the problem, the more apparent this unpleasant fact becomes" (28), Geertz believes that this epitomizes "what the moral situation embodied in the sort of work (anthropologists) do is like": "the imbalance between an ability to find out what the trouble is (…)and an ability to find out what might be done to alleviate it, is not confined to the area of agrarian reform, but is pervasive: in education (…), in politics (…), in religion" (29). All this being "on a rather impersonal, merely professional level", it is usually met "more or less well, by conjuring up the usual vocational stoicism"(29) according to which "many social scientists (protest) 'I don't give advice, I just point at the roots of the problem'" (39).

The second instance of the ethical dimension in social work involves what Geertz calls "the ethically ambiguous character" of the "inherent moral asymmetry of the field situation" , "the inherent moral tension between investigator and subject" (34, 33, 37). Something the "usual vocational stoicism has found it harder to neutralize".

"The relationship between an anthropologist and an informant rests on a set of particular fictions half seen-through" (34), what Geertz calls the "anthropological irony" (29), which is not understood in the traditional conception of the detached researcher.

> "After awhile one even develops a certain resignation toward the idea of being viewed, even by one's most reliable friends, as much as a source of income as a person. One of the psychological fringe benefits of anthropological research – at least I think it is a benefit – is that it teaches you how it feels to be thought of as a fool and used as an object, and how to endure it" (30).
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> The anthropologist comes to represent "an exemplification (…) of the sort of life-chances (the informants) themselves will soon have, or if not themselves then surely their children" (31). This is what Geertz calls "the touching faith problem": "it is not altogether comfortable to live among people who feel themselves suddenly heir to vast possibilities they surely have every right to possess but will in all likelihood not get"(31). Thus the anthropologist "is left ethically disarmed, (…) back on a barter level; one's currency is unnegotiable, one's credits have all dissolved (which leaves the one with) a passionate wish to become personally valuable to one's informant – i.e., a friend – in order to maintain self-respect. The notion that one has been marvelously successful in doing this is the investigator's side of the 'touching faith' coin: one believes in cross-cultural communion (one calls it 'rapport') as one's subjects believe in tomorrow" (33)

> "The anthropologist is sustained by the scientific value of the data being gathered (…) the informant's interest is kept alive by a whole series of secondary gains (…) but if the implicit agreement to regard one another (…) as members of the same cultural universe breaks down, none of these more matter-of-fact incentives can keep the relationship going very long" (34)

This awkward situation is faced by people who are eager to deny "their personal subjection to a vocational ethic" (that implies "failing to have emotions nor perceiving them in others"), who "insist that social scientists are unmoved by moral concerns altogether – not disinterested but uninterested " (39), and invoke their "detachment", "relativism", "scientific method". Geertz admits to the "difficulties of being at one and the same time an involved actor and a detached observer" (39). And yet, he reminds us that "the anthropological field as a form of conduct does not permit any significant separation of the occupational and extra-occupational spheres of life . (…) In the field , the anthropologist has to learn to live and think at the same time" (39).

Thus "the central question to ask about social science is (…) what does it tell us about the values by which we – all of us – in fact live?" (38). The answer provided by Geertz suggests that social science can offer moral judgments by keeping the tension between the usual opposites open. It is a suggestion:

- "to combine two fundamental orientations toward reality – the engaged and the analytic – into a single attitude", and
- "to look at persons and events (and oneself) with an eye at once cold and concerned", which represents a "sort of research experience (that) has rather deeper, and rather different, moral implications for our culture than those usually proposed" (40).

In conclusion:

> "A professional commitment to view human affairs analytically is not in opposition to a personal commitment to view them in terms of a particular moral perspective (…) the flight into scientism or, on the other side, into subjectivism, is but a sign that the tension cannot any longer be borne (…) these are the pathologies of science, not its norm. (…) To attempt to see human behavior in terms of the forces which animate it is an essential element in understanding it (…) to judge without understanding constitutes an offense against morality" (41).

Where Geertz stands:

- Considers social research as a moral experience.
- Considers morality as the meaning people attribute to their acts when faced with ethical dilemmas (people are moral agents).
- The anthropologist undergoes a moral experience when facing the dilemma of the imbalance between uncovering problems and solving them (the object of research) as well as in relating to his/her subject (the ironic asymmetrical relationship).
- Strategy for keeping the tension open between morality and social science: analyzing with commitment.

Robert Bellah

In 1980 Robert Bellah organized a seminar at Berkeley on *Social Science as Moral Inquiry*, the idea that the dimension of morality is constitutive of social science itself. His intention in acknowledging that "value commitment in some form or another is inevitable in doing social research", was to grant visibility to a way of thinking that existed but was never discussed as such (Bellah et al., 1983: 8).

The seminar was to answer two broad questions: "a) Why has this interest and concern about moral issues in social science occurred? In other words, what are social science's difficulties? Why are past guidelines unsatisfactory, suspect, pallid, wrong, or whatever? b) If we are to abandon the stance (or some would say, pretension) of value-neutrality, how can we act so as to assure that social science doesn't disintegrate into ideologies? In other words, what kind of moral theories can we use and how can we use them and still retain legitimation in our own and others' eyes?"[7]

[7] Letter of Norma Haan to Albert Hirschman, October 5, 1979. Hirschman Archives, b. 8, f.6.

In a 1983 book with the same title (Haan et al., 1983) that collected some of the remarks from the seminar (and added other chapters as well), Bellah et al. (1983: 8) warn that thinking along these lines will lead to a reconsideration of the character of the various disciplines ("how the failure – of economics, psychology, anthropology and history – to deal adequately with the ethical dimension has precipitated questioning and doubt and stimulated the beginning of new formulations") and of the "role of social science in social policy".

For his own part, Bellah (1983)[8] leans toward the strategy of reviving the moral stances that have always been present, although disguised, in social theory, and sets out to provide a reformulation of social science going as far back as the tradition of Aristotelian social and moral thought. He finds a continuity from ancient social *inquiry* to modern social *science* as regards the relationship between morality and social thought; and he opposes it to the contemporary idea that it is possible to speak of a social *science* only when such concepts as detachment, value-neutrality, etc. have been established.

Following Aristotle, who considered social *inquiry* as "a practical science, one indelibly linked to ethical reflection", Bellah sees the terms "moral sciences" and "social sciences" as interchangeable (1983: 360). The notion of "social science as practical reason" (361) sets the stage : "the purpose of social science (is not) to provide the most effective means to predetermined ends. Social science as practical reason must, on the contrary, make ends as well as means the objects of rational reflection" (362).

While the ancients (Plato, Aristotle) were concerned with what the good life is (p.362), the modern Machiavelli was "not interested in how the world should be, but how it actually is"(362) – which is considered the starting point of a social *science* . Yet Machiavelli had no less passionate ethical ends in view (the unity and independence of Italy). The same could be said for other giants in modern political thought: Hobbes envisaged the role of an absolute state with the moral aim of survival. Tocqueville, who spoke of a new political science, was gripped by the passion for liberty. And Marx too, for all his "scientific" socialism, was moved by moral passion.

Then, coming to his own disciplinary field, sociology, which is a comparatively recent product of social thought, Bellah contrasts the ethical aims of the main figures in the field with their claims of "establishing a genuine scientific sociology" (p. 373).

Durkheim, the father of a positivist sociology who preached that social facts should be considered as things, was imbued with a fundamental morality. His idea of "society" as prior to the individual, "had profound and political implications that determined the practical meaning of his science" (366) and his practical activities as an educator. At the same time, he thought "about society 'scientifically' by deriving the ethical ends of action from empirical investigation" (367).

Weber, talking about science as a vocation, had "eloquently argued that the relation between scientifically discoverable means and ethical ends is extrinsic and that science had nothing whatever to say about ends" (368). Yet his work expressed a conflict between the ethics of responsibility (the use of legitimate force) and the ethics of ultimate ends (brotherly love), between power and the religion of salvation, between science and ethics (369).

This mixture of ethics and science allows Bellah to borrow a concept from Weber that would become central to his own thinking: that of tradition[9], which would even incorporate the germane Weberian concepts of charisma and rationality.

> "In modern societies, both the general social tradition and the tradition of social thought are multiple, diverse and partially in conflict" (372). And the individual will continually move among all of them, using one tradition (e.g., social inquiry) to criticize another (e.g., the norms of society) or "reflecting

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[8] The quotes that follow come from Bellah's chapter in the Haan et al. (1983) book.

[9] Sullivan (1983), in the same book, reconsiders the communitarian tradition in American political thought, contesting the liberal tradition that ignores the moral dimension, and reclaiming the earlier notion of society (republican) and of responsible citizens that existed alongside the liberal tradition.

> on the logical coherence of, and the empirical evidence for, different traditional views (…) In this process of reception, practice and reflection it is quite arbitrary to decide what is cognitive and what normative, when we are being scientific and when ethical. Indeed intellectual acuteness and ethical maturity in this area go hand in hand. Wisdom is the traditional word that includes both" (373).

Such wisdom had however been repressed as, following Parsons' way of understanding the "professionalization of science", sociologists like Collins denied pursuing any practical benefit, but rather "a coherent, powerful, and verified set of explanatory ideas" (374). Since our heads are filled with false consciousness and traditions, Collins maintained, "a distinction between value judgments and logical and descriptive statements" (375) is mandatory. Helping us to see people as animals maneuvering for their interests, and making us "aware of the plurality of realities, the multiplicity of interests, and the tricks used to impose one reality upon others", social science will free our minds from illusions.

In rejecting this attitude, Bellah clarifies the reason for his strategy of combining morality and social science by exposing what had always been there: "it is extremely unlikely that sociology can ever be a paradigmatic science in Kuhn's sense (…) what creates coherence and continuity in social science is not consensus around a theoretical paradigm" (like the one proposed by Collins as the last word) "but concern for practical problems in the world" (377). "Social science is not cumulative, and we still have much to learn from the ancients" (380).

> If we understand that "in the social sciences we study the same kinds of beings that we are" (376) , we cannot put ourselves outside or above what we study, and "we can undertake our inquiry only by continuing our dialogue with those we study and relative to whom we are as much students as teachers" (377). "If social science is to be practical in (the) classic sense of the word, it means something very different from technological application on the model of the natural sciences. It means, above all, the participation of the social scientist in the process of self-understanding "(378).

Where Bellah stands:
- Considering social science as practical science, he sees ethical and cognitive issues intertwined.
- Understands moral issues as being concerned with ethical values: what is good.
- His focus is double: the object of research (ethical values such as community, responsibility, etc.) and the relationship between the scientist and the object of study (the same social matrix).
- Strategy for dealing with the topic: exposing what already exists in social thought, starting from the ancients.

Albert Hirschman

The contribution of Hirschman to this episode is highly meaningful. In a single essay, notably entitled "Morality and the social sciences: a durable tension", Hirschman completes the journey between the two strategies of combination envisaged by Bellah et al.: from admitting that morality could exist in disguise, to advocating a new social science based on the interconnection between "proving and preaching" – that is to say, keeping the tension open between analysis and moral commitment, in consonance with the thought of his colleague and friend Geertz.

The story of this article goes back to the Berkeley seminar promoted by Bellah. Initially Hirschman was uncertain whether, and how, to attend the seminar[10]; in the end he did participate, and spoke about "shifting involvements"[11], the oscillation between the pursuit of happiness through consumption (private life), subsequent disappointment and enthusiasm for public action, and renewed disappointment and a return to the private sphere: a way of looking at the meaning people attribute to their actions ("the fact that man is reflective, in addition to other things, means that there is a possibility of changing tastes"). In a comment to

[10] At that time Hirschman was highly concerned with moral issues, especially with reference to events prompted by Latin American dictatorships. See the notes on *Universities and Human Rights* written for the American Academy of Social Sciences.

[11] Hirschman was at the time preparing a book under the title of "Private happiness vs. public happiness", that later on saw the light as *Shifting involvements* (Hirschman, 1982). A reminiscence of the original title is found in the Italian translation, called *Felicità privata e felicità pubblica* (Il Mulino, 1983).

the seminar (*Remarks on the Berkeley Conference*[12]) he justifies his remarks there by claiming that his way of treating shifting involvements allows a more attractive way of viewing man than as the usual *homo economicus* maximizer, and provides a "moral in disguise". Bellah – who was familiar with Hirschman's intellectual and practical experience[13]- liked what he had to say, and asked him to write "a kind of autobiographical reflection of the moral implications of your own work over a fairly extended period of time"[14].

Hirschman did not follow this suggestion literally, but – as usual having in mind his economist colleagues, trapped within their models[15] – started thinking about how the theme of morality fared within economic theory and social science in general: here again he found oscillations and turning points. Then he prepared a lecture[16] that later became the article "Morality and the Social Sciences: a Durable Tension", published both in the anthology on the Berkeley seminar (Haan et al. 1983) and in his *Essays in Trespassing. Economics to Politics and Beyond* (1981)[17]. Here he develops his argument in three steps.

First, he analyzes how social science evolved through an anti-moralist stance based on the purported incompatibility between moralizing and analytical-scientific activity, the "separation between heart and head (brains)" (23). To this end, he follows two paths which, in a note entitled *Moral and amoral thinking in economics*[18], written in preparation for the article, he labeled "history" and "epistemology", respectively.

The **history** of social thought refers to the "amoral birthmark of social science", when social science emerged through a separation from morality: Machiavelli, Mandeville, Smith. According to this view, society is kept together not by love or benevolence but by interest.
The **epistemology** of social thought refers to the fact that social science advances through new discoveries that are counterintuitive, shocking: "affirming the hidden rationality of the seemingly irrational, defending as moral or useful or at least innocent social behavior that is widely considered to be reprehensible" (1983, 24). This trend is clearly recognizable in what he calls "the paradox of amorality", the "'imperialist' expeditions of economics into areas of social life outside the traditional domain of economics", whereby "criminals, lovers, parents, bureaucrats or voters were all found to be busily 'maximizing under constraints'" (25).

Second, he recognizes that there is a recent "resurgence" of morality, acknowledging the need for moral behavior in order to make society work: this is morality in disguise, meant to correct some of the limits of economic theory. In micro-economics, the need to correct certain forms of market failures is met by adherence to a code of professional ethics, or by recognition of the importance of trust over self-interest (26); in macro-economics, there is a need for forms of benevolence in the relationships between social classes in order to overcome inflation (27).

In introducing the idea of morality in disguise, Hirschman goes back to the "trained incapacity" (Veblen) of social scientists, which Geertz had in mind as well: "when one has been groomed as a 'scientist' it takes a great deal of wrestling with oneself before one will admit that moral considerations of human **solidarity** can effectively interfere with those hieratic, impersonal forces of supply and demand" (30). Therefore, given the difficulty of reconciling moralizing and analytical understanding , "one effective way for social scientists to

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12 Hirschman Archives, Box 8, folder 7.

13 Bellah was certainly thinking of the motivations behind some of Hirschman's writings, such as *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade*, or *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*.

14 letter of April 24, 1980.

15 A similar critique of restricted economic models, and the need to enlarge the economics perspective, can be found in mc Pherson's (1983) chapter in the same book.

16 Given on the occasion of receiving the Frank E. Seidman Distinguished Award in Political Economy at Memphis, Tennessee (25th September 1980)

17 In a letter to Walter Lippincot, publisher at Cambridge University Press, Hirschman says that this article "makes a good ending for the book, and justifies (along with other pieces) the slightly pretentious 'and beyond' of the subtitle" (Hirschman Archives, box 58, folder 10). In a similar vein, Hirschman suggested as the title of a collection of his essays that appared in Italian and included this article, "L'economia politica come scienza morale e sociale" (ed. by Luca Meldolesi, Liguori, Napoli, 1984).

18 Hirschman Archives, box 8, folder 9.

bring moral concerns into their work is to do so unconsciously" (Hirschman, 1983: 31), as he himself had done while writing EVL.[19]

In the *Remarks on the Berkeley Conference* he had gone even further:

> "I tend to think, in general, that moralizing social science is going to be successful to the extent that it adopts this sort of *disguise*. This is one way of reformulating the Weberian doctrine of *Wertfreiheit*, and is also the way we can have the best of both worlds: continue to enjoy the democratic benefits of the contention that social science must be positive and value free and yet smuggle in, as it were, some strong moral messages[20]. I do not pretend that this is the only way of incorporating moral judgments into social science; just that it is worthwhile to think not only *what* are the moral considerations that belong to the field, but also *how* they should be marshalled. Perhaps it is in this case that, like happiness, morality in the social sciences eludes a direct quest" .

In the note on *Moral and amoral thinking* there is a passage where he praises the merits of morality in disguise that was not reproduced in the article: "amoral myopia keeps us from noticing allied phenomena"[21]. What follows is a list of his own discoveries:

- The tunnel effect: "mistaken for the opposite of envy when it is actually info effect". Elsewhere[22] he had praised the hopeful merit of the tunnel effect: he had written that sociologists had given too much attention to relative deprivation, without thinking of the tunnel effect.
- Voice : "means bringing in face-to-face relations with love and hate as opposed to anonymous exit"
- "Relational exchange": this is a reference to the presentation of Carol Gilligan at the Berkeley Conference, in which she had criticized the mainstream theory of moral development for being based only on a (male) ethic of fairness and rights and having eclipsed a morality of responsibility and care, and had instead advocated a personality that included both characters.[23]
- "Fusion of striving and attaining: these activities get neglected by economists who need cost-benefit split" . This may refer to:
    - shifting involvements: change in attitude that is internally driven, not exogenous;
    - Passions and interests: "Man is not the rational actor of the economist, but a blundering idealist, someone with interests and passions" (in *Remarks on Berkeley*).

One reason for bringing moral concerns in unconsciously is that "it seems (…) impractical and possibly even counterproductive to issue guidelines to social scientists on how to incorporate morality into their scientific pursuits"(31), for the very reason that "morality (…) belongs in the center of our work", and only if "social scientist are morally alive and make themselves vulnerable to moral concerns (…) they will produce morally significant works, consciously or otherwise." (31)

This admission brings him to the third step, an abrupt rise toward a "more ambitious, and probably utopian thought", in which Hirschman imagines

> "a kind of social science that would be very different from the one most of us have been practicing: a moral-social science where moral considerations are not repressed or kept apart but are systematically commingled with analytic argument without guilt feelings over any lack of integration; where the transition from preaching to proving and back again is performed frequently and with ease; and where moral considerations need no longer be smuggled in surreptitiously nor expressed unconsciously but are displayed openly and disarmingly. Such would be, in part, my dream for a 'social science for our grandchildren'".

Was it a hint at a future self-subversion?[24] The author (Hirschman) as a moral agent?

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19 This is a reference to the introduction to the German edition of EVL.

20 This would resemble Bellah's interpretation of Weber.

21 In *Remarks on the Berkeley Conference*: "my contention that I explain more than they do", e.g. by introducing "disappointment" in consumption theory.

22 Letter to Claus Offe, of 15 September 1988 (Hirschman Archives, box 5, folder 16).

23 See chapter by Gilligan in Haan et al. (1983). See also his presentation of Gilligan (Hirschman Archives, box 55, folder 5).

24 Self-subversion, which Hirschman theorized about in the later book *A Propensity for Self-subversion* (1995), means critical reflection on his own ideas and writings. He had already done it with regard to *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (in "Beyond asymmetry: critical notes on myself as a young man and some other old friends", 1978). In the morality article

Where Hirschman stands:

- Believes that morality belongs at the center of our work.
- Deals with people's behavior and its meaning. Understands even his own feelings about moral issues (guilt feeling for leaving Germany in 1933).
- Main topic tackled: the object of research: shifting involvements, exit and voice, passions and interests. Then, his own attitude: self-subversion.
- Strategy for dealing with the topic: keeping the tension open: preaching and proving.

Charles Anderson

At that time, even within policy analysis one could find voices arguing for the enlargement of the field of interest of the discipline based on ethical principles. Charles Anderson, a political scientist expert in Latin America, from whom Hirschman (1963) had borrowed the idea of "reform-mongering", had just written the article "The place of principles in policy analysis", which Hirschman praised in the following words: "It is a rather eloquent statement arguing that policy analysis cannot just take policymakers' preferences as given, as though they were consumer tastes, but must inquire into moral principles such as justice. The fact that this paper was published as lead article in an ordinarily staunchly positivist journal (the *American Political Science Review*) is highly significant"[25].

Anderson criticized contemporary theories – those that had directly influenced "evaluations with a positivist approach" – that reduced political evaluation to a mere "technical appraisal of the impact of public programs" (1979, p.711). According to these theories "values cannot be justified in terms of objective criteria. Hence they must be regarded as 'preferences' on the part of the policy maker. 'Technical' or 'rational' policy analysis can only begin once relevant values have been stipulated" (1979: 712). Anderson, on the contrary, considered policy evaluation as "the process of making deliberate judgments on the worth of proposals for public action"(1979: 711). Criticizing the instrumental conception of rationality, he stated that

> "to be regarded as 'reasonable' a policy recommendation must be justified as lawful, it must be plausibly argued that it is equitable and that it entails an efficient use of resources" (1979: 712-3). To do so, it must be based on "a repertoire of basic concepts including authority, the public interest, rights, justice, equality and efficiency (which) as standards of policy evaluation (…) are not simply preferences. They are, in some sense, *obligatory* criteria of political judgment" (1979: 713).

It is remarkable how a scholar like Anderson – contrary to the many academicians who aim at colonizing a lesser research sector such as evaluation with their methodologies – shows a genuine interest in the world of evaluation, where at least a few authors (Scriven, House, Schwandt) have had a similar concern for bringing morality into their own field.

Where Anderson stands:

- Asserts centrality of ethical principles in policy analysis.
- Deals with ethical values, such as public interest, autonomy, rights, justice.
- Main topic tackled: the object of research: recommendations must rest on basic concepts, not accepting that policy goals are preferences.
- Strategy for dealing with the topic: keeping open the opposition between the concept of instrumental rationality in policy studies and the principled criteria of public interest.

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he does it for the first time within a single article, in a way similar to what he would later do within a single book, *The Rhetoric of Reaction*. Finally, in *A Propensity,* he would use the same approach for all his main books (with the exception of *Passions and Interests*) but not his articles. Thanks to Luca Meldolesi for this note.

[25] Letter to Norma Haan of January 7, 1980 (Hirschman Archives, box 8, folder 6) in which Hirschman asked whether there was a possibility of inviting Anderson to the seminar.

The contributions we have considered come from four authors reasoning about the relationship between morality and social science from within their own disciplinary domains. For all of them, the strategy for overcoming the dichotomy combined undermining some tenets of their discipline from within, and enlarging the boundaries of that same discipline.

Bellah and Anderson, looking from the perspective of "ancient" disciplines such as Aristotelian social inquiry (Bellah) or political science (Anderson), reclaimed continuity with an old tradition where morality was a legitimate topic of research. Geertz and Hirschman, from the position of the "modern" social sciences, aimed at the inconsistencies of the "amoral" perspective in the sciences of man, and proposed to keep the tension open between the two poles of morality and analysis: "analyzing with commitment" for Geertz, "preaching and proving" for Hirschman.

Each of them identified some form of morality at the center of social research, whether it referred to people's behavior, to principles governing society, or to the relationship between the researcher and his/her object of study. The strategies proposed for making it evident reflected the theoretical position of each thinker, showing how deep the link was in their own mind, and the originality of each contribution.

At the same time, there are striking affinities. Geertz and Hirschman hinted at the "trained incapacity" of the social scientist, and looked for stratagems to overcome it. Bellah and Hirschman recognized that moral issues entered social research in disguise. Bellah and Anderson rejected an instrumental use of policy analysis. Hirschman and Anderson criticized the idea that moral values could be considered as customers' or politicians' preferences, not to be subject to social analysis.

What is interesting in this exercise is the breadth of arguments that can be brought to the task.

Morality can enter social science because it is a trait of people's behavior, and as such it is the object of social science. Geertz looks at the meaning people attribute to their acts when facing ethical dilemmas. Hirschman looks at how people reflect about their enthusiasm or disappointment regarding public or private life. Bellah is interested in the way people move between the general social tradition and the tradition of social thought.

Morality can also come in because of the very nature of social research, where the scientist and the object of study belong to the same social matrix (Bellah). This can be expressed by the irony of the asymmetrical relationship between the anthropologist and the informer, analyzed by Geertz, and by the introspection by which Hirschman reflects on his way of addressing the topic of exit vs. voice.

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