381

Interpretive policy inquiry: A response to the limitations of the received view

PAUL HEALY

Department of Philosophy, University College, Cork, Ireland

Abstract. This paper seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on interpretive policy inquiry. As such, its specific focus is the presentation of the interpretive approach as a corrective for the shortcomings inherent in the standard view. Following an outline of the problems facing the received view, a systematic, philosophically grounded, statement of the interpretive position is developed. Thereafter, the tangible positive consequences for policy making of this approach are further discussed. The paper concludes with some reflections on the relationship between the positivistic and interpretive paradigms.

Introduction

Following its acceptance as an influential model in the social sciences, the interpretive (or hermeneutic) paradigm has begun to exert an influence on the policy domain also. However, despite the fact that a number of insightful exploratory essays have appeared over the last few years on the topic of interpretive policy inquiry,[1] the scope and relevance of this approach to policy studies have been far from exhaustively documented. Accordingly, the present paper is a further contribution to the growth of our understanding about this important new field of development. In performing this task, it seeks to build on, rather than to replace, the arguments advanced in the earlier studies.

But in contrast to several of the earlier studies which dwell on the relationship between interpretive social science and public policy, the present essay focuses directly on the policy domain as such, and attempts to present a *systematic* articulation of the interpretive viewpoint, showing how its several aspects are internally connected and interrelated. The central theme which integrates and guides this analysis is the presentation of the interpretive approach as a corrective for the shortcomings of the dominant or received view of policy making. Therefore, in the first part of the essay, I try to show how the received view breaks down at a number of critical junctures. This discussion sets the scene for the presentation of interpretive inquiry as an alternative approach to policy problems, which can respond to the criticisms of the received view that have been outlined. In the final part of the paper, the positive consequences of interpretive policy inquiry are further discussed, and the question is probed as to how the new paradigm relates to the old.

It should be noted at the outset that the present discussion has something

of a philosophical focus. To those who recognize the interdisciplinary character of policy debates,[2] this contribution will be a welcome one. Yet, to those concerned primarily with the pragmatics of policy making, it may seen to avoid some of the more pressing technical considerations. Overall, however, this philosophical treatment of the issues is defended on the grounds that this kind of inquiry is necessary for the articulation of a systematic framework which can integrate and guide policy-related research and action. Apart from the fact that this approach avoids the dangers of a merely ad hoc or heuristic appropriation of interpretive insights, it is also defended on the grounds (to be developed in the course of the essay) that it is a mistake to attempt to sharply separate theory and practice. Indeed, as will become apparent, an overarching concern of the interpretive approach is to develop an integrated framework which overcomes just such artificial dichotomies.

Limitations of the received view and the need for a new approach

Before exploring the question of the limitations of the "received view," it is clear that something must first be said about the reference of this term with respect to the policy domain. In this regard, it must be admitted that, to a certain extent, it is a simplifying assumption of the present study — though, as we shall see, one that is not altogether unjustified — to presuppose that there is a "received view" of policy inquiry.

To begin with, whereas the term has been applied to the style of positivistic inquiry still dominant in the disciplinary social sciences (Polkinghorne, 1983), it may seem questionable to apply it to a field of inquiry which, despite its long "informal" history, has only relatively recently gained firm institutional status.[3] In addition to this, there is the problem that, as one recent commentator has put it, "policy analysis as a field is currently divided and incoherent," and "definitions of policy analysis are almost as numerous as policy analysts" (Dryzek, 1982, p. 310). Yet, on the other hand, the existence of a multiplicity of definitions does not necessarily preclude the apprehension of a core theme in policy studies, as evidenced by the fact that a multiplicity of definitions in the fields of, say, social science and philosophy does not preclude a firm understanding of the focus of these disciplines. In any case, my intention in the present context is not to take issue with one or other definition that has been offered of the policy sciences, but rather with a common theme which informs several, with the view, that is, that the policy sciences are "applied social sciences."[4] Although assuming this prerogative is certainly not above criticism, it is the view that the policy sciences are best understood as applied social sciences that I shall label the "received view," and whose implications I shall now go on to briefly discuss and challenge.

In conceiving themselves as applied social sciences, the policy sciences have been strongly influenced by the ideal of improving the lot of men in society by employing the findings of social research to produce a better social order. Indeed, as Brian Fay has aptly put it, the enduring hope here has been that "just as the natural sciences have provided men with a certain kind of knowledge by which they can control their natural environment, thereby making it more hospitable and productive, so also the knowledge gained from social science will enable men to control their social environment, thereby making it more harmonious and congruent with the needs and wants of its members" (p. 19). But while the validity and worth of this goal can hardly be denied, the means of attaining it, construed on analogy with the natural sciences, proves more difficult to defend.

As is well known, the natural sciences (positivistically conceived) see themselves as concerned primarily with (deductive-nomological) explanation, with a view to the prediction and control of natural phenomena (see, e.g., Hempel, 1965). Translated to the social domain, this viewpoint inevitably gives rise to an emphasis on social engineering and instrumental rationality as the best methods of identifying and attaining policy goals (Fay, 1976, esp. pp. 39–47). Thus, the traditional view of policy making embodies the tenets that policy goals can be best attained by the manipulation of causal variables in the social environment (social engineering) and that the most efficient means of attaining these goals can be (scientifically) determined by an ends-means analysis (instrumental rationality). It is the adequacy of these two tenets in particular that I want to challenge in order to show the intrinsic limitations of the received view. Although necessarily briefly sketched here, this critique sets the stage for presentation of the interpretive alternative. What I want to suggest with respect to instrumental rationality and social engineering is that, in the case of complex policy problems, these strategies encounter severe methodological difficulties and are undesirable in case on normative grounds.

Let us first look at the notion of instrumental rationality as it applies to the policy domain. A first problem here is that, even if otherwise desirable, this approach cannot always be methodologically effective because it is often not possible to specify either a unique goal or a unique starting point for the analysis, although such a separation is presupposed by the traditional ideal. What is at issue here has been pinpointed by Rittel and Webber (1973) who argue that most contemporary policy problems (e.g., poverty, crime, racial discrimination) are "ill-structured" or "wicked" in character – defined, that is, by the fact that such problems lack not just an agreed-on, unique best solution but also (even) a unique best formulation. What we are left with instead, even among equally competent policy experts, are competing interpretations of both the problem domain and the solution space. (Thus, for example, crime on the

streets can be explained "by not enough police, by too many criminals, by inadequate laws, too many police, cultural deprivation, deficient opportunity, too many guns, phrenological abberations, etc." (p. 166).) Each of these problem formulations has strong arguments in its favor, and no one of them is clearly superior, though, of course, the action to be taken to resolve the problem will vary, depending on which formulation is preferred. The upshot of this with regard to the possibility of instrumental analysis is that, in the absence of a clearly defined starting and end point for the analysis, the attempt to specify a unique best solution algorithm breaks down.

Then, the alledged value-freedom of instrumental analysis raises additional problems of another sort,[5] not the least of which is that, by insisting on value-neutrality as a characteristic of rationality, it places the selection of goals, which it concedes to be an evaluative process, beyond the pale of scientific analysis, and hence, consigns what is arguably the most important part of the process to the realm of irrational decision (decisionism).[6] Apart from this, however, it seems clear that no choice between alternative means for attaining a given goal is possible unless *some* evaluative criterion of selection is employed. It seems clear too that in the absence of conscious endorsement of other values, the evaluative criterion utilized is likely to be that of technological efficiency. But technological efficiency cannot be the sole (or even the primary) criterion guiding the selection of means, as instanced by the fact that, if it were, the extermination of, say, the sickest five percent of the population might prove the best way of securing the maximum degree of health care for the population as a whole. No, since policy decisions inevitably affect the wellbeing of at lesat some members of society, the means of executing them, and not just the goals, must be inherently moral. Indeed, as Aristotle saw, the process whereby goals are decided upon, and the means whereby they are attained are as important to politics and policy making as the goals themselves.[7] Accordingly, instrumental analysis cannot be value-free and disinterested, as the traditional account supposes,[8] but must consciously recognize the inevitably normative character of the selection of means as well as of ends. A policy science which insists too strongly on the power of disinterested instrumental rationality overlooks some important methodological and normative constraints inherent in the policy domain.

These criticisms of instrumental rationality also tell against social engineering as an ideal of policy science, since this is essentially the method of implementing the results of instrumental analysis, once the relevant variables to be manipulated in the social environment have been identified. However, additional problems also beset social engineering in its own right. Two of these — one methodological and one normative — warrant special mention here. On the methodological level, there is the very real problem that the kind of well-grounded and reliable empirical generalization needed to render possible the

control of social processes simply has not been forthcoming, despite an extensive search for suitable candidates.[9] According to some, the search for reliable laws of social behavior which could be widely used for engineering purposes is doomed to failure, because, for instance, of the human capacity to reflexively appropriate such information, and on this basis, to transform behavior in a way that renders such generalizations inapplicable. For others, however, whether the dearth of reliable generalizations in the social sciences is a necessary or merely contingent outcome is a less important consideration than the moral objection that this method of effecting social change does not do justice to the autonomy and right to self-direction of the agents affected by change; even if possible technologically, this approach is untenable on the grounds that it treats people as objects to be manipulated rather than as moral agents who have a right to determine their own future and the conditions under which they will live. Both these kinds of objection give special impetus to the development of an interpretive alternative to the engineering viewpoint.

In summary, then, the received view of policy making as an applied science, embodying the twin tenets of instrumental rationality and social engineering, encounters significant difficulties of both a methodological and normative sort. Such difficulties are serious enough for (if not fatal to) the received view to legitimize the search for another conception of policy making which can compensate for them. The interpretive approach, now to be considered, is an especially promising candidate.

The interpretive response[10]

Interpretive inquiry, whether in the social science or policy domains, starts from a very different set of assumptions than the positivistic model, and so provides a different framework for the understanding of social processes. A central tenet of interpretive inquiry is that, as Jennings puts it, "human beings are essentially makers of meaning; they are purposive agents who inhabit symbolically constituted cultural orders, who engage in rule-governed social practices, and whose self-identities are formed in those orders and through those practices" (1983, p. 27). From this perspective, then, human beings are never just objects to be controlled, but rather (autonomous) subjects who pursue subjectively meaningful goals in the context of their life-world. Accordingly, the aim of interpretive social inquiry is primarily understanding (*Verstehen*) rather than explanation (*Erklären*) – the understanding, that is, of the agent's intentions and actions in the context of the intersubjective cultural world in which they occur (and which they, in part constitute).

Emphasis on understanding rather than on explanation argues the need for a new goal for policy making other than that of social engineering. For in addi-

tion to the objections already considered, it is clear that in its concern with the identification and manipulation of causal variables social engineering cannot take adequate account of the intersubjective cultural context which renders social action meaningful. The result of thus abstracting from the life-world context is that policy goals are imposed from the outside rather than derived from the life plans of the affected agents themselves. Interpretive inquiry, whose primary focus is the self-understanding of social agents, must seek to reverse these priorities; it must make self-understanding central so that, coming to see themselves and their social situation in a larger, more informed context, the actors can themselves decide on the appropriate goals for future development. In other words, interpretive inquiry must posit an *educative* rather than an engineering ideal for social theory (cf. Fay, 1976). Specifically, the new goal of interpretive policy inquiry may appropriately be termed "enlightenment."

Like Habermas's emancipatory interest, from which it draws its inspiration, the enlightenment ideal of policy inquiry seeks to promote, through self-reflection, the self-understanding of individuals and societies, and by fostering open, non-distortive communication, to increase the degree of personal autonomy and responsibility for decision making exercised by the actors themselves.[11] Thus, interpretive policy inquiry seeks to derive its recommendations for social change from the decisions of the social actors themselves, made in enlightened understanding of their situation, of the possibilities it contains for development, and of the full range of choices open to them. Clearly, it is not by imposing change from the outside that policy makers can contribute to the enlightenment goal, but rather by providing actors with additional information about their situation and the conditions which affect it, with a view to increasing their capacity to make informed choices about the course of future developments. The sharp contrast between the engineering and enlightenment goals has been aptly summarized by Fay in the following terms: "In the former, an elite determines rational courses of action for the group by knowing certain natural necessities, whereas in the latter all the members of the group actively engage in deciding what it is they are and want, and what arrangements must be altered or established in order to fulfil themselves" (1976, p. 105).

Since enlightenment clearly cannot be achieved through manipulation or coercion, it must involve the direct *participation* of those who stand to be affected by social change. This, in turn, requires the existence of free and open channels of communication between policy experts and the affected actors. Again, Habermas's conception of the "ideal speech situation" provides a helpful model of the kind of free, symmetrical, responsible, and unconstrained conditions of discourse which are aimed at here (see esp. Habermas, 1973). The purpose of such discourse in the policy context is to generate a debate about the problem situation and its potential solutions with a view to formulating, and argumentatively justifying, a range of policy actions which have

the approval of the actors themselves. To achieve this goal, it is not sufficient, of course, that the policy expert consult the actors only at the outset of the process, rather mutual consultation must be ongoing throughout the entire operation (Fay, 1976, p. 106). The recurring requirement here, then, is that the actors themselves be actively involved in all stages of the policy process, and that changes be effected only in accordance with their enlightened self-understanding. The policy-making process, interpretively conceived, is, accordingly, inherently democratic or communitarian in intent – and as such is an especially appropriate model in the devolved and community-based context of policy making in the eighties (cf. Jennings, 1983).

It follows too that, far from endorsing an ideal of value-neutrality, interpretive policy inquiry conceives its task as inherently normative and moral. This is because this kind of inquiry is specifically aimed at deepening our understanding of what it is to live a responsible human life, and because its knowledge claims are intrinsically linked to the satisfaction of human purposes and desires. Likewise, interpretive policy inquiry is inherently normative in its intent to foster human development through improved self-understanding rather than through strategic manipulation. In addition to transcending the fact-value gap, interpretive inquiry also seeks to overcome the theory-practice dichotomy. Accordingly, its aim is not merely the disinterested explanation and description of social phenomena, but rather that of discursively opening up new vistas and new perspectives on social processes and problems, and thereby providing insight into alternative ways of acting in problem situations so as to creatively resolve them.

Along with the goal of enlightenment through participation, interpretive inquiry posits a new understanding of the methodology involved in validating knowledge claims and justifying policy recommendations. In the space available, it is only possible to mention a few of the more significant methodological issues, and these, as will become apparent, draw their inspiration from the interpretive critique of positivistic social science.

Rather than pursuing the kind of epistemological certainty and unique best solution to policy problems envisaged by instrumental rationality, the interpretive approach fosters the understanding that a multiplicity of competing interpretations are possible with regard to both the problem formulation and the solution space. On the interpretive account, this plurivocity of interpretations derives from the fact that social reality cannot be apprehended in a context-less, culture-free way, but depends rather on the situated perspectives of both the social actors and the observer who seeks to understand their social world.[12] This means that no single viewpoint, however well-informed, is adequate to the task of definitively characterizing social reality, or in the case of policy analysis, of definitively formulating the problem situation. That this is indeed the case has been well illustrated by Martin Rein's remarks à propos of

the poverty problem. "Though we know that poverty is a real phenomenon," Rein observes, "the size of the problem, its character, and the course of action that policy should accept in combatting it will depend largely on how we define and conceptualize poverty. In other words, the facts we attend to depend upon the construction we impose on reality. We construe reality; it is our only way of understanding it. The construal of reality, in turn, depends upon our purposes" (1983, p. 86).

Recognition of the fact that no one of these interpretations, however expertly informed, can claim definitive status, but must rather compete with other interpretations advanced from alternative perspectives, does not, of course, mean that these interpretations are arbitrary or lack criteria of validation. On the contrary, as Kockelmans (1975, 1978, 1980) has shown in the context of the human sciences, the formulation of acceptable interpretations is rigorously controlled by such criteria as cogency, coherence, and respect for the data (the "things themselves") as well as by the (quasi-infinite) process of refining and correcting interpretations in the light of part-whole analyses (cf. the "hermeneutic circle"). Moreover, the validity of interpretations which fall within an appropriate range of acceptability must be further secured by subjecting them to (what Ricoeur calls) a "concrete dialectic of confrontation with opposite points of view," that is, by testing their claims to validity in an argumentative context (understood on a jurisprudential analogy), wherein the probative evidence for these claims is rigorously assessed and carefully adjudicated. Furthermore, this process of argumentative validation is revisable and open-ended, since "even the final interpretation appears as a verdict to which it is possible to make appeal" (Ricoeur, 1971). The relevance of viewing the policy process on an argumentative model has recently been confirmed by Dunn (1982) in a paper entitled "Reforms as Arguments," and a dialectical model for facilitating policy consensus in cases where there are competing interpretations of the problem situation has been developed and tested by Mitroff and Mason (1981, 1982; Mason & Mitroff, 1981).

Following Habermas and Apel, it can be shown that the context of argumentation also provides the key to understanding the *rationality* of the policy-making process (cf. Bernstein, 1976, pp. 211−14). We have already considered reasons why the traditional ideal of instrumental rationality, entailing an abstract survey of alternatives, analyzed in ends-means terms and conducted from an Archimedean standpoint outside of the process, cannot be appropriate here. What is required rather is a notion of situated rationality[13] which takes account of the historically situated, perspectival, and dynamic character of all social inquiry. Central to the notion of situated rationality is an appreciation of the intersubjective and dialogical context of inquiry, wherein a community of inquirers reflectively and argumentatively assesses the competing validity claims for proposed courses of action (Apel, 1980). Such a communication

community is committed to understanding society from within, rather than subjecting it to criteria of evaluation or recommendations for change which are merely imposed from the outside. In this communicative context, the governing criterion of rationality is not that of certainty or self-evidence (solipsistically attained), but rather that of cogent argumentation, grounded in the requirement that participants give good reasons for their positions, and be able to defend them against criticisms from opposing points of view (cf. Habermas, 1984, pp. 16–18). This requirement serves to ensure that, in addition to being compatible with the actors' needs and interests, acceptable policy recommendations are shown to be cogent and workable responses to the problem situation. As explicated by Habermas (1973), this argumentative procedure continually anticipates the attainment of the ideal of uncoerced consensus, though it is recognized that this ideal is counterfactual and regulative only. Most importantly, it must be understood that this process of rational grounding admits only of participants: there is no place here for disinterested observers – be they scientists or policy makers – because, at a minimum, the would-be observer is compelled to participate to rightly comprehend and assess the strength and validity of the arguments adduced by the actors (cf. Habermas, 1984, pp. 113–20). In contrast to the traditional image of the disinterested instrumental planner, this approach thus presents the picture of a rational policy maker who, "as a practical communicative agent, makes claims for which he or she [as a participant in the process] is willing to offer justifications and arguments in discourses where (in principle) only the force of the better argument may prevail" (Forester, 1984, p. 57).

Finally, it must be noted that the policy making process, interpretively conceived, is an inherently revisable and open-ended process. This is so in the first instance because, as we have seen, the interpretive policy maker does not claim to be setting forth an immutable body of laws which incorporate a definitive blueprint for the direction of social change, but rather to be advancing recommendations whose grounds are always subject to argumentative appeal. Furthermore, since on this model the success of any proposals for change is linked to the continued successful self-formation of the affected actors themselves, it is clear that policy recommendations must be amenable to revision and change as the self-understanding of the actors develops and grows. The requirement that policy recommendations be revised in the light of growth in the actors' self-understanding again underscores the necessity for sustained and ongoing interaction between experts and agents in conditions of unrestricted and uncoerced communications as a primary requirement for successful policy making.

Consequences and relations

Proceeding via a critique of the traditional engineering and instrumental rationalist views of policy making, we have now developed an outline of an interpretive response to the methodological and normative complexities of policy making. Focusing on the inherently meaningful and reflexive character of human action, interpretive policy inquiry takes as its goal the enlightenment and continued self-formation of the agents themselves. This goal, it has been argued, must be achieved, not by social engineering, but by improving the self-understanding of the affected actors, and by directly involving them in working out directions for change. On this view, the policy maker is essentially conceived as himself (or herself) a participant in the process of change whose task it is to educate and enlighten other participants rather than manipulate them in strategic ways. Only by thus respecting the autonomy and right to self-direction of those affected by change can the policy-making process fulfil its inherently moral intent. Policy making, interpretively conceived, we also saw to eschew the notion of unique best (instrumental) solutions in favor of recognition of the need for plurivocal interpretations of both problem formulations and solutions. The rationality and objectivity of the new approach, it was also argued, resides in the possibility of a context of free and uncoerced communication in which the validity claims of the competing policy interpretations can be argumentatively assessed. Indeed, far from issuing definitive blueprints for social change, interpretive policy inquiry is characterized throughout by its flexibility and revisability.

In presenting this sketch, the value of the interpretive approach has been justified mainly by reference to the shortcomings of the traditional approach and by reference to the normative demands of policy making. In addition, however, it is now possible to point to some tangible positive consequences accruing to this approach in its own right.

To begin with, given its emphasis on enlightenment through participation, it may be anticipated that the interpretive approach will not encounter the kinds of resistance to planned change that frequently vitiate attempts to impose change from the outside. And, since there is no question here of having to try to convince "stakeholders" *after the fact* of the desirability and worth of proposed changes, interpretive policy analysis should prove more successful in affecting change than the more standard approaches, even as judged by criteria of efficiency.

More important than technological efficiency, however, is the contribution that interpretive inquiry can make to effective policy making through improving our understanding of ourselves and others, and thereby opening up new possibilities for social practice. As our earlier discussion attempted to show, in contrast to the relationship between theory and practice envisaged on the

traditional approach, enlightenment does not affect practice in a cause-effect way. Rather because the self-understanding of social agents is constitutive for social practice, improved self-understanding contributes to improved social policy by presenting an enriched vision of society and opening up new possibilities for social development. A new angle of vision on social processes and relations provides, in turn, for a new perspective on specific problem situations and for creative insights into an expanded framework in which to seek their resolution. The gains made in this way are conserved and enhanced through the kind of mutual dialogue and cooperation that has been emphasized throughout the preceding discussion.

Furthermore, the present recommendations are timely in view of the mood of increased skepticism, even among sympathetic commentators, about the effectiveness for policy practice of the currently dominant positivistic paradigm; even if it were otherwise desirable or acceptable, the explanation-prediction-control model of social inquiry simply does not seem to have the direct and positive influence on policy change that was once anticipated and hoped for (cf. Weiss, 1977b; Lynn, 1978; Lindblom & Cohen, 1979). Rather, as recent research indicates (e.g., Cohen & Garet, 1975; Weiss, 1977a), it is frequently by way of broadened understanding and improved conceptualization of social reality, leading to a new angle of vision on social processes and problems, with the increased possibility of creative resolutions of the problems confronting policy makers, that social inquiry contributes most to policy making. Indeed, the potential positive benefits of this enlightenment function of social and policy inquiry, which we have justified on theoretical grounds throughout the present essay, have been amply illustrated by Dryzek (1982) and Fischer (1985) in their respective analyses of the Berger inquiry and the Head Start program. And, as has been noted already, the very real possibilities of such an interactive and dialogical approach should not be underestimated in the devolved and community-based context of policy making in the eighties.

Since this essay began with a critique of the received view of policy making, it is fitting to conclude with some additional reflections on the relationship between the interpretive approach and the received view. Given that, as we have seen, the interpretive approach differs from the received view both in general orientation and on numerous specific points, the major question here is whether the two approaches can possibly enter into a productive relationship or whether they must inevitably be seen as mutually exclusive. On this difficult question, we must content ourselves in the present context with the following brief remarks in favor of a complementarity of approach.

The critical comments advanced in the opening section of the essay clearly show the inadequacies inherent in equating policy making with social engineering and instrumental rationality, and the problems which result from overextending the claims of rational policy making, conceived on the naturalis-

tic model of an applied social science. If, however, the interpretive ideal of enlightenment argued for here is granted priority as the overall goal of the process, a legitimate – indeed, necessary – place can also be found for naturalistic policy making. The potential contribution of more standard methods of analysis can be seen on the level of social inquiry by reference to the fact that aspects of the social environment which actors inhabit undoubtedly exert a quasi-causal influence on their behavior, and this kind of influence can best be explained in (quasi-) nomological terms. Thus, even the motives, purposes, and values which figure so prominently in interpretive inquiry are themselves in part the product (in a quasi-causal sense) of certain psychological, sociological, political, and religious factors in the social environment, and to the extent that this is so, their genesis and development can appropriately be explained in (quasi-) nomological terms (cf. Fay, 1976). Quasi-causal explanation and interpretive understanding are thus both necessary for the attainment of a perspicuous and comprehensive understanding of society; both are necessary elements in a well-rounded process of enlightenment.

Likewise, on the policy level, once priority is given to the overall goal of participative policy making based on enlightened self-understanding, instrumental rationality can also be seen to have a significant contribution to make to the planning process. This can be seen, for example, by reference to the fact that, in a manner analogous to nomological explanation, instrumental analysis can make a positive contribution to the process of enlightenment by providing additional (perhaps quantitative) information about the relative costs and benefits involved in the pursuit of certain goals, selected by the participants; such information would clearly be of great benefit in argumentatively assessing the relative merits of these goals. Indeed, it must furthermore be recognized that the goal of enlightenment through participation is essentially a regulative ideal which is typically counterfactual and difficult to attain in practice. In the absence of the attainment of this ideal (and/or the instantiation of the conditions under which it may be attained), other more standard policy-making procedures may have to be utilized.

But, having thus acknowledged the validity of the complementarity thesis – the fact that causal and interpretive analysis *both* have an important and irreplaceable function in the explication of social processes and the formulation of policy – it must be emphasized again that, for the kinds of reasons advanced in the body of the essay, priority must be given, in the final analysis, to the enlightenment over the causal-explanatory and instrumental goals. In other words, the aim must be that of utilizing explanatory social science in the service of enlightenment, rather than vice versa. Or, as one commentator recently put it, quasi-nomological behavioral science must still be "thematized and reflectively controlled by another type of social science," whose leading cognitive interest is not that of social engineering, but rather that of "dialogi-

cal planning according to the regulative principle of discursive deliberations of a communication community" (Apel, 1977, p. 447). Given this emphasis, the insightful proposal has been advanced that the mututal mediation of the two approaches can appropriately be conceived on the model of (Freudian) psychoanalysis, wherein both narrative and causal accounts are employed by the analyst to further the analysand's self-understanding (see, e.g., Radnitzky, 1970; Habermas, 1971; Apel, 1972). But whether or not the psychoanalytic model is ultimately the best way of conceiving the relationship between the two paradigms is a matter whose consideration must remain the topic for another study. The main point I would like to reaffirm in conclusion is that the interpretive approach to policy inquiry itself resists the designation of an applied social science. Instead of viewing knowledge as something which is first collected and only subsequently applied, the interpretive approach presents the idea of a single, integrated, and continuous inquiry, guided from the outset by an interest in enlightenment and emancipation.

Clearly much still remains to be done to develop the potential of this emerging approach to policy problems. At the very least, however, the present remarks give new meaning to Martin Rein's observation, advanced independently of an interpretive perspective as such, that the design of social programmes "is likely the telling of relevant stories," which, he adds, "provide an interpretation of a complex pattern of events with normative implications for action, and not with a universal law" (1976, p. 266).

Notes

1. Of special interest in this regard are the following: Fay (1976, Chaps. 4, 5), Dryzek (1982), Jennings (1983), Paris and Reynolds (1983, Chap. 6), Sullivan (1983).
2. As deLeon puts it: the activities of policy inquiry "must be truly interdisciplinary, for the problems being presented are simply too complex to permit solution by a single discipline's biases" (1981, p. 4; cf. Lasswell, 1951, p. 14).
3. For an insightful short account of the development of the field, see Dunn (1981, pp. 7–33).
4. For recent discussions which reveal the implicit or explicit influence of this conception of the policy sciences and their development, see, e.g., Dye (1975, 1976); MacRae (1976, pp. 277–307); Dunn (1981, pp. 7–38).
5. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see, e.g., Fay (1976, pp. 49–57), Fischer (1980, pp. 19–63).
6. For a classic discussion of this issue, see Weber (esp. 1949, 1958a, 1958b); see too Popper (1964).
7. Such an understanding is already implicit in Aristotle's distinction between *techne* and *praxis* (*Ethics*, VI, 4).
8. Cf. Rein (1976, pp. 256–57): "The positivists assume that one can separate the elements of inquiry and conduct an analysis which deals with values in isolation from the objective level of study. But such a separation is impossible and leads to unrealistic positions."
9. Thus, Nagel (to cite just one commentator) observes that "in no area of social inquiry has

a body of general laws been established, comparable with the outstanding theories in the natural sciences in scope of explanatory power or in capacity to yield precise and reliable predictions" (1979, p. 447).

10. It is with some trepidation that I refer here to "the interpretive response" and "the interpretive approach," since these designations could suggest a greater degree of unanimity of approach than exists among interpretive theorists. In defense, I can only say that my efforts here to tap common hermeneutic themes should not be taken to preempt such differences between interpretive theorists (e.g., between Habermas and Gadamer) as do exist, nor to suggest that this is the only statement of interpretive policy inquiry that could be developed. What is central to my use of these terms (as will quickly become apparent in what follows) is the attempt to designate a mode of social and policy inquiry which places enlightened self-understanding and self-direction at the center of things, and which appeals to some recurring themes in interpretive analysis to justify and develop this standpoint. Given this focus, it would arguably be more appropriate to speak here of a "critical-hermeneutic approach." But I avoid this more cumbersome title partly for reasons of convenience, but especially because no particular emphasis is placed here on the theme of ideology critique.

11. Compare Habermas's (1971) treatment of the "emancipatory interest"; cf. also McCarthy's (1978) and Bernstein's (1976) commentaries on Habermas's three "cognitive interests."

12. As Giddens (1976) shows, the proper understanding of the social world effectively involves a "double hermeneutic."

13. In addition to the works of Habermas and Apel already referred to, see too Schrag (1980), esp. Chap. 5. Schrag's discussion illuminates aspects of "situated rationality" other than the argumentative dimension emphasized by Habermas.

References

Apel, Karl-Otto (1972). "The A Priori of Communication and the Foundation of the Humanities," *Man and World* 5: 3–37.

Apel, Karl-Otto (1977). "Types of Social Science in the Light of Human Interests of Knowledge," *Social Research* 44: 425–470.

Apel, Karl-Otto (1980). "The Communication Comunity as the Transcendental Presupposition for the Social Sciences," in Glyn Adey and David Frisby (trans.), *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy.* Boston: Routledge, pp. 136–179.

Bernstein, Richard (1976). *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Callahan, Daniel and Jennings, Bruce (eds.) (1983). *Ethics, the Social Sciences, and Policy Analysis.* New York: Plenum Press.

Cohen, David and Garet, Michael (1975). "Reforming Educational Policy with Applied Social Research," *Harvard Educational Review* 45: 17–43.

DeLeon, Peter (1981). "Policy Sciences: The Discipline and Profession," *Policy Sciences* 13: 1–7.

Dryzek, John (1982). "Policy Analysis as Hermeneutic Activity," *Policy Sciences* 14: 309–329.

Dunn, William (1981). *Public Policy Analysis.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Dunn, William (1982). "Reforms as Arguments," in Ernest House et al. (eds.), *Evaluation Studies Review Annual,* Vol. 7. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 83–116.

Dye, Thomas (1975). *Understanding Public Policy,* 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Dye, Thomas (1976). *Policy Analysis.* University, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Fay, Brian (1976). *Social Theory and Political Practice.* New York: Holmes and Meier.

Fischer, Frank (1980). *Politics, Values, and Public Policy.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Fischer, Frank (1985). "Critical Evaluation of Public Policy: A Methodological Case Study," in John Forester (ed.), *Critical Theory and Public Life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 231–257.

Forester, John (1985). "Practical Rationality in Planmaking," in Michael Breheny and Alan Hooper (eds.), *Rationality in Planning*. London: Pion.

Giddens, Anthony (1976). *New Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: Basic Books.

Haan, Norma et al. (1983). *Social Science as Moral Inquiry*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Habermas, Jürgen (1971). *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jürgen (1973). "Wahrheitstheorien," in H. Fahrenbach (ed.), *Wirklichkeit und Relexion*. Pfullingen: Neske, 1973, pp. 211–265.

Habermas, Jürgen (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1. Boston: Beacon Press.

Hempel, Carl (1965). *Aspects of Scientific Explanation*. New York: Free Press.

Jennings, Bruce (1983). "Interpretive Social Science and Policy Analysis," in Daniel Callahan and Bruce Jennings (eds.), *Ethics, the Social Sciences, and Policy Analysis*. New York: Plenum Press, pp. 3–35.

Kockelmans, Joseph (1975). "Towards an Interpretative or Hermeneutic Social Science," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 5: 73–96.

Kockelmans, Joseph (1978). "Reflections on Social Theory," *Human Studies* 1: 1–15.

Kockelmans, Joseph (1980). "Some Reflections on the Meaning and Function of Interpretative Sociology," *Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 42: 294–324.

Lasswell, Harold (1951). "The Policy Orientation," in Daniel Lerner and Harold Lasswell (eds.), *The Policy Sciences*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 3–15.

Lindblom, Charles and Cohen, David (1979). *Usable Knowledge*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

Lynn, Laurence (ed.) (1978). *Knowledge and Policy: The Uncertain Connection*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences.

MacRae, Duncan, Jr. (1976). *The Social Function of Social Science*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

Mason, Richard and Mitroff, Ian (1981). *Challenging Strategic Planning Assumptions*. New York: Wiley.

McCarthy, Thomas (1978). *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mitroff, Ian and Mason, Richard (1981). *Creating a Dialectical Social Science*. Boston: Reidel.

Mitroff, Ian and Mason, Richard (1982). "On the Structure of Dialectical Reasoning in the Social and Policy Sciences," *Theory and Decision* 14: 331–350.

Nagel, Ernest (1979). *The Structure of Science*, 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Paris, David and Reynolds, James (1983). *The Logic of Policy Inquiry*. New York: Longman.

Polkinghorne, Donald (1983). *Methodology for the Human Sciences*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Popper, Karl (1964). *The Poverty of Historicism*, 3rd ed. New York: Harper.

Radnitzky, Gerard (1970). *Contemporary Schools of Metascience*, 2 Vols. Göteborg: Scandinavian University Books.

Rein, Martin (1976). *Social Science and Public Policy*. New York: Penguin Books.

Rein, Martin (1983). "Value-Critical Policy Analysis," in Daniel Callahan and Bruce Jennings (eds.), *Ethics, the Social Sciences, and Policy Analysis*. New York: Plenum Press.

Ricoeur, Paul (1971). "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," *Social Research* 38: 529–562.

Rittel, Horst and Webber, Melvin (1973). "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," *Policy Sciences* 4: 155–169.

Schrag, Calvin (1980). *Radical Reflection and the Origin of the Human Sciences*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Sullivan, William (1983). "Beyond Policy Science: The Social Sciences as Moral Sciences," in Norma Haan et al. (eds.), *Social Science as Moral Inquiry.* New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 297–319.

Weber, Max (1949). "The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality," in Edward Shils and Henry Finch (eds.), *The Methodology of the Social Sciences.* New York: The Free Press, pp. 1–47.

Weber, Max (1958a). "Politics as a Vocation," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber.* New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 77–128.

Weber, Max (1958b). "Science as a Vocation," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber.* New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 129–156.

Weiss, Carol (1977a). "Research for Policy's Sake: The Enlightenment Function of Social Research," *Policy Analysis* 3: 531–545.

Weiss, Carol (ed.) (1977b). *Using Social Research in Public Policy Making.* Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.