

# On the value of personal archives

Some examples from the archives of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal – with a main focus on Gunnar

*Stellan Andersson*

## **Zusammenfassung**

Es gibt keine Vorschriften oder Regeln, die Privatpersonen dazu zwingen würden, ihre Briefe und Manuskripte aufzubewahren oder ihre Hinterlassenschaften einem Archiv zu übergeben, damit diese Materialien der Wissenschaft künftig dienen können. Die meisten Menschen meinen, ihre Unterlagen ohne weiteres vernichten zu dürfen. So kommt es leider dazu, daß viele wertvolle Dokumente unwiederbringlich zerstört werden. Das nicht nur wegen seiner wirtschafts- und bevölkerungswissenschaftlichen Publikationen weltweit bekannt gewordene Ehepaar Alva und Gunnar Myrdal hinterließ so zwar dem Stockholmer Archiv der Arbeiterbewegung 150 Regalmeter Archivalien – aber leider wurde von ihnen auch vieles weggeworfen bzw. ging im Laufe ihres turbulenten Lebens verloren.

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*Stellan Andersson ist Archivar in Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek in Stockholm.*

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On the last few occasions when I visited Gunnar Myrdal in the autumn of 1986, it sometimes happened that he asked me to help him go through his mail. We opened the letters, I had to inform him very briefly from whom they were and what they were about. Then they went straight into the waste-paper basket. Against my protests he answered: “No, there is nothing I can do now.”

The archives of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal consist of the documents – calendars, books, articles, letters, manuscripts, memoranda, clippings, photos etc. – they decided to keep. If they threw items away they are, of course, lost. And we, as archivists, do not try to complete the material in the archives with copies etc. from elsewhere. The principle of provenance is important. The archives of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal now kept at *Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek* are the result of a process of formation from the 1910's up to the middle of the 1980's, when Alva and Gunnar Myrdal died. Some documents have been collected in a systematic way, others have been kept by chance. Important to all of us working with the archives, as archivists or scholars, is not to break the formed structures to pieces and scatter the information in our efforts to make use of it. Also the principle of respect for original order is important.

What we have to do is to make the documents easily accessible through well thought-out and careful arranging efforts, with good finding aids: lists of contents, container lists, registers and indexes, with good references and footnotes.

### Missing notes and manuscripts

In the summer of 1929, when it was as hot as hell in the streets of London, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal were sitting in the reading-room of the British Museum. Gunnar was working with the literature of his older colleagues in economic theory: Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, James Mill, Senior, Sidgwick, J. B. Say etc., and he was taking notes, lots of notes. When leaving for New York in early October he had filled seven large notebooks with the most important observations for his new book on science and the political element in economics, *Vetenskap och politik i nationalekonomien*, published in 1930. All those notebooks are lost!

In the spring of 1931, in Geneva, Gunnar and Alva wrote an important article on the population problem and social policy for the Swedish Social Democratic periodical *Tiden*. The article was never published, but it came to be the cornerstone on which the famous book *Crisis in the Population Question* was constructed three years later. The manuscript of the article, as the manuscript of the book, is missing.

In September 1942, Gunnar Myrdal returned to Sweden after almost four years work on *An American Dilemma*. When, in 1973, he left big parts of his archives

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to Arbetarrörelsens arkiv, he had lost most of the final manuscript, just Part V, Chapters 26–45, remained, together with some correspondence. He was very sorry, but later he told me that he probably never had received them; they were lost already in transit over the Atlantic ocean during the war.

### Destroyed documents

The archives of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal are very voluminous and comprehensive, about 1,600 archive boxes (volumes) or 150 shelfmeters. But of course, a lot of interesting material is still missing. You cannot expect anything else from people who have such an active life with many homes all over the world. Some documents have been destroyed, as when the basement of their house at Västerlånggatan 31 in Stockholm was flooded in the middle of 1960's.

You can not conclude from the material that is left, if documents have been intentionally destroyed, as when Alva burnt all her earlier writings when she met Gunnar in 1919. Their daughter Sissela Bok wrote in her biography on *Alva: A Daughter's Memoir*: "[...] she decided to take an irreversible step: she would burn her poems, her adventure stories and novels, even all her diaries." Their son Jan Myrdal wrote in his novel *Karriär* in 1975:

"Yesterday I paid a visit to the Myrdals at Västerlånggatan and I had a glögg. They were busy burning papers in the fireplace. They are giving everything to the archives nowadays. One pile to the Arbetarrörelsens arkiv, one to the Royal library. Of course they want to have a clean posthumous reputation. And that is reasonable. [...] I spoke to the people at the Arbetarrörelsens arkiv, and they are going to put a man onto it."

In the deed of gift to the Arbetarrörelsens arkiv Gunnar Myrdal wrote on October 1st, 1973:

"I have gone through all these files of letters and sometimes I have taken away some manuscripts and clippings. However, I have not removed any letter, no matter how unimportant it is. I have not got the time. In a positive sense this means that I have not been tempted to take away anything in the interest of selfishness. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv will have the whole lot absolutely uncensored."

### If no documents were preserved?

Before my brief introduction to the Myrdal archives, let us make a small intellectual experiment: How important are the documents that have been preserved? What would it mean if nothing was saved? Is it possible to find the same relevant information in other sources? Or: what do the documents in the Myrdal archives add to the information that we can find elsewhere? Of course we also have to answer the first question with another question: important for what?

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I want to point to some self-evident facts and I hope you will agree that sometimes it doesn't hurt to be reminded of the obvious.

First of all: Can you today, in the society we live in, in our day and age, read some of the results of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's ideas and works, or were their lives and their efforts just "whirls in the stream of Modernity". I am not going to answer that question now.

Basic facts about Alva and Gunnar Myrdal: where can young people, who know nothing about them find out who they were and what they did? If we answer: have a look at the Internet (where Alta Vista gives us almost 1.000 hits on the "Gunnar Myrdal" search), search through encyclopaedias, in *Who is Who*, etc., they, of course, get the most elementary data about their lives and works. Most detailed and correct are the articles in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*.

Then we have their own published works, which can at least in part be found at libraries. In the *bibliography* of Gunnar Myrdal slightly more than 1,100 numbers are listed; Alva Myrdal's include almost 500 numbers for the years 1932 to 1961 (we are still waiting for the second volume).

In his article *The Need for a Sociology and Psychology of Social Science and Scientists* from 1972, Gunnar wrote:

"The almost complete lack of scientific inquiry on the research behaviour cannot be defended by a greater difficulty of carrying out studies in this field. The corpus delicti, our writings, is on the table. And for the rest, it should not be more difficult to get at the other forces influencing us in our work besides our intention to seek true knowledge, than, for instance, to study, as has been done, how the behaviour of business executives is not determined simply by their desire to maximize profits. The concept 'economic man' of the classical economists has long since been discarded as inadequate to reality – except by a few of the most ardent 'welfare theorists'. Meanwhile the 'scientific man' is not even defined. He exists only implicitly in the form of a virtual taboo on raising the psychological and sociological problems of how our research activity is conditioned."

In the archives of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal you will find their published works: monographs, articles and printed speeches, as well as the interviews, in series under the section number 2 called: *Own works*. The collections are almost complete. The works are described and catalogued in a computer-based register, a complement to the container lists.

### **The works of others and other archives**

Of course Gunnar Myrdal's words about "the almost complete lack of scientific inquiry on the research behaviour" are not correct, neither about himself nor about other scholars. Just have a look at the lists of literature in our new book *Vägvisare* and you will find a lot of research done in order to understand the

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“scientific man” Gunnar Myrdal. So far there is no biography written, that’s true. But, of course, it’s also true that works about Alva and Gunnar Myrdal by others, and memoirs, articles in papers and periodicals, as well as recorded radio- and TV-programmes can give us important information.

Let us then take a look at some other archives and collections. The first example I will use is *An American Dilemma*. In 1973 the Carnegie Corporation in New York sent two rolls of microfilm which included the documents – correspondence, memos etc. from Gunnar Myrdal’s work on the book from 1938 to 1942 – that the Carnegie Corporation had in its archives. Gunnar handed over the microfilms to Arbetarrörelsens arkiv at once. The Carnegie Corporation’s archives you will find at Columbia University Library in New York. The original documents concerning the whole research project *Carnegie- Myrdal Study of the Negro in America* you will find in the New York Public Library’s Schomburg Collection in New York. The material is microfilmed and published by the Kraus-Thompson organisation. In his book on *Gunnar Myrdal and America’s Conscience*, Walter A Jackson gives us a very interesting Essay on Sources, where he tells us all about the relevant and important archives he used in his work.

Let us now take a look at some examples from Gunnar Myrdal’s activities in Sweden during the 1930’s and 1940’s: You will find the archives from the Unemployment Committee of 1927, the Social Housing Policy Committee of 1933, the Population Commission of 1935, the Post-War Economic Planning Commission of 1944 etc. in Riksarkivet, the National Archives of Sweden. If you want to have a closer look at the material from Gunnar’s activities in the UN Economic Commission for Europe you have to go to Geneva and the Palais des Nations where the ECE’s archives are kept (but I’m sorry to say, that, when I visited the ECE in the early 1980’s, the documents were apparently not in very good order – and Cay Sevón has later confirmed my impressions; about the situation today I cannot say anything). Then of course you also have the UN’s archives in New York.

The 1960’s give another example: If you want to study Gunnar’s activities in the Swedish Committee on Vietnam you will find their rather copious archives at Arbetarrörelsens arkiv.

Just a few examples from Alva Myrdal’s work: first an example from the 1930’s and 1940’s when she was very active in the women’s organizations: The Professional Women’s archives you will find at Riksarkivet. From her time in India as ambassador: her reports home to Sweden are kept in the archives of the Foreign office in Stockholm, as are the reports and documents from her time as disarmament negotiator in Geneva and New York during the 1960’s and 1970’s.

In the archives and collections of other people you will of course also find signs of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal. As in the letter collections in the archives of the

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famous Swedish economists during the 1920's and 1930's: Gösta Bagge, Gustav Cassel, Eli F. Heckscher, Bertil Ohlin, Erik Lindahl, Dag Hammarskjöld, etc.

### Conclusion 1

There seems to be rather good and rich material to find out about Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's lives and works in other sources.

#### What can you find in the Myrdal archives?

The first impression I got when I looked at the piles of documents delivered during 1973 and 1974 was one of chaos. There were heaps of letters, manuscripts and clippings – and whatever it could be – without any visible order; you could see brown envelopes with notations on them: letters from Cassel, from Heckscher, from Hammarskjöld, India; manuscripts of books: *Nation and Family*, *Women's two Roles*, *An American Dilemma*, *Challenge to Affluence* etc., and articles, speeches, lectures, addresses, printed, typed or written by hand. But you could also see the well arranged files of letters, done by all the competent and efficient secretaries, who worked for Alva and Gunnar over the years.

I worked then for almost two years in the mid 1970's with the documents in their archives (with the exception of some months when we produced a big exhibition on Alva Myrdal at Kulturhuset in Stockholm) and could then set up a preliminary list of contents and registers, which up till today have been the finding aid of the Myrdal archives.

During the rest of their lives, Alva and Gunnar added new material to their archives. Documents they had found somewhere, which belonged to already delivered material, or newly produced work. I cannot say how many times Alva called and asked me to come over and get a further plastic bag with some important material. Once, when she was in a very good mood, she said: "Of course this is a lot of work for you, but it will be much worse when we are dead. Then you will also have to answer all the questions yourself!" There was a new lot of material when Alva died in 1986, but I myself was then busy with another important task: the private archives of the late Prime Minister Olof Palme.

Just recently I have had the opportunity to start a reorganisation of the documents in the Myrdal archives, and I will arrange it in the way we nowadays use for personal archives. I intend to give you a very brief summary of this, and at the same time I will illustrate it with different types of documents.

We have the documents arranged in six sections (or archival groups):

- Personal documents
- Own works
- Correspondence

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- Documents in order of activities and work
- Collections
- Remainder

*Personal documents*, the first section (as the other sections) of arranged documents in personal archives very often includes different series, and in this case there are three: one for Alva, one for Gunnar and a common one for both of them. Here you will find certificates, calendars, diaries, accounts, contracts, autobiographical notes etc. All this material is basic if you want to make clear what and when they did something. If you combine the information which the documents in this section give, with the information you get from clippings, letters, manuscripts, photos etc. in other sections, it is almost possible to map Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's lives, day by day, sometimes hour by hour, from the early 1930's up to the beginning of the 1980's.

Sometimes the information is just like a little piece in a jig-saw puzzle: On June 22, 1943, there is a hardly readable note in Gunnar's calendar: "3 Von Trott". Walter Jackson gives us the full story behind this note in his book, Chapter 4, part "Myrdal and the July 20, 1944, Plot to Kill Hitler", (p. 181–185). At three p.m. on June 22, 1944 Gunnar Myrdal received a visit from the German diplomat Adam von Trott zu Solz, "a key member of the anti-Nazi Resistance movement" in Germany, introduced him to John Scott, an American friend, and discussed the planned coup d'état and what the Allies could do. von Trott's "trip to Sweden was the last direct contact between a prominent figure of the German Resistance and Allied intelligencies before the attempted assassination of Hitler". Five days after the attempt von Trott was apprehended, then "tried in a Nazi court, subjected to gruesome torture, and hanged from a wire cord on August 26".

In section number two, *Own works*, you will find the published books, articles, speeches, lectures, interviews and the manuscripts both of the published works and of the unpublished ones. Each "work" is catalogued in a computer-based register, which today tells us that there are ca. 1.000 published works and ca. 600 manuscripts by Gunnar Myrdal in this section.

I mentioned earlier that the manuscript of *Crisis in the Population Question* is missing in the Myrdal archives. In his book, Allan C. Carlson gives a very detailed and meritorious history of the background to the book and of the way in which it was created. About the process of writing it, he says:

"In early spring of 1934, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal decided to return to their 1931 Geneva manuscript on the population question and revise, update, and expand it into book form. For this purpose they rented a cabin in the Norwegian mountains for the summer, worked out their remaining theoretical differences, and produced a manuscript originally titled *The Population Question and Social Policy*. Gunnar was responsible for the historical, theoretical, economic, and

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statistical chapters, while Alva drafted the chapters on families, children, and specific program suggestions.<sup>1</sup> "

Allan C. Carlson's sources were the interviews he himself conducted with Alva and Gunnar Myrdal in the summer of 1976, and an interview with Alva Myrdal published in *Folket* on May 2nd, 1936, and a letter from Gunnar to Jacob Viner from October 1st, 1934.

On October 6th, 1934, Alva herself wrote a letter to her friend Eveline Burns in New York, where she gives a more detailed story about what happened in Norway. This letter was not available to Allan Carlson when he wrote his dissertation. Alva writes:

"We have had a very good summer indeed. We spent a month's well earned holidays alone in a cottage in the Norwegian mountains. And after eleven days of paradisiac life – climbing mountain peaks and so on – our discussions became more and more intellectual and simply had to be put on paper (paper was the only thing reminding of intellectual occupations we had taken with us) and so we started to write a new revision of something that had once been intended as an article on population and social policy. To continue the boasting: we had a very perfect division of labour: G. wrote four chapters and I was domestic, then I wrote four chapters and got meals served, dishes washed and my bed made. But the book now is not two parts coupled together, because next step was that each one rewrote the other one's part (I am ashamed to confess that when I handled G:s stuff it was quite a lot scratched out while he had to complete and round out my thoughts – the difference between the cyclical and the schizoid) over again. But the most perfect part of the cooperation was the discussion of composition, ideas etc. which was interwoven in our daily discussions for two months. Nobody would find in the book one sentence that is solely one author's contribution. And now the book is sold (for two thousand) and we are reading the last proofs. Population is the connecting subject, but from that point of view we deal with all social problems: from housing to individual qualities, sterilization, abortion, 'the family in the world', nursery schools, equal wages, school feeding, socialization of medicine, Malthus, the eighties, individualism etc. etc. Essaistic but with scientific criticism of all kinds of investigations and proposals in the different fields – well, it cannot be described. We are going to get enemies in all camps in the social field but I think there will be a revival of discussion along these lines."

"The funniest thing is of course the coincidence with the baby. My psychiatrist friend has already laughed at us being so devilishly intellectualized that we have to write three hundred pages in order to clear out our motives behind the decision to multiply.<sup>2</sup> "

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<sup>1</sup> The dissertation was published in 1990 under the title *The Swedish Experiment in Family Politics : the Myrdals and the Interwar Population Crisis*. Quote from p. 69

<sup>2</sup> Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's second child, their daughter Sissela was born in December 1934, just after the book was published.

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If we have the intention to investigate and analyse the making of a book, who wrote what, it would have been very valuable, if the notes, drafts, different versions of the manuscript etc. had been preserved. (This is the case with some of their books, as Alva Myrdal's *The Game of Disarmament*.) The manuscript of *Crisis* is missing, and we have to trust what is said in the letter: "Nobody would find in the book one sentence that is solely one author's contribution."

*Crisis* and *Contact with America* from 1941 are special, as to these books both Alva and Gunnar Myrdal are mentioned as authors. But it is important to call attention to the fact that they always read each others' manuscripts and made changes and additions, also in such important works as *Asian Drama*. In the Preface to this book Gunnar writes:

"Alva Myrdal has, of course, been closely associated with my work from the time of our early youth. At the beginning of this study she undertook to assist in preparing the chapters on health and education. After some groundwork by her, Altti Majava took over the responsibility for assembling information for the chapter on health, but Mrs. Myrdal remained with her task in regard to education till the very end of the study in the summer of 1967.(p. xvii)"

He continues:

"In 1955 when Mrs. Myrdal was head of the Social Science Department of UNESCO – and well before economists were roused to their present interest in education (and occasionally, health) – she gave five lectures in the Heath-Clark series at the School of Tropical Medicine, London University, on 'Health and Education in Economic Development' which, because of the pressure of her other duties, were not published. I feel a husband's satisfaction that in our cooperation on the present book she has seen her thoughts on these subjects amplified and specified in the broader setting of the development in South Asia."

In the collection of all the different versions of the manuscript of *The Game of Disarmament* you can find written by hand pages by Gunnar Myrdal. Alva Myrdal did sometimes talk with pride about themselves as two battleships, working separately, but with a common goal.

Section 3, *Correspondence*, includes both letters to and copies of letters from Alva and Gunnar Myrdal. When the computer-based letter-register is complete it will be possible to tell you the exact number of letters in the collection. Today I guess there are more than 120,000 items in the 400 volumes in the series in this section. Then it will also be possible to compare, in a statistical manner, how Gunnar's (and Alva's) contacts with other people, scholars, institutions, towns and countries developed over the years. Today you can see from the container lists that Sweden, USA and England dominated, and that during the 1950's and 1960's the contacts with India were numerous, and so on. In the correspondence countries all over the world are represented, and of course, this material gives us very important information about their lives and works, but also very useful information about different questions of importance during this century.

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Just one example: Scholars have discussed the influences of Max Weber and Axel Hägerström on Gunnar Myrdal's *The Political Element*, published in 1930. The first time Hägerström is mentioned in the material in the Myrdal archives, as far as I have discovered, is in a letter from the Danish professor and philosopher Alf Ross. In 1925 Alf Ross and his wife, Else-Merete, had got to know Alva and Gunnar Myrdal in London, where both Gunnar and Alf were working on their dissertations. In a letter to Gunnar from Berlin on March 7th, 1926, Alf is discussing some books by Hägerström.

Much later, during the spring of 1974, in letters that were exchanged between Gunnar Myrdal and the Professor of Statistics at the University of Gothenburg, Herman Wold, (both he and Gunnar Myrdal were members of the Royal Swedish Academy of the Sciences), the influence of Weber and Hägerström on Gunnar is discussed. I am not going to give an account of these letters here, I am just going to give you some hints. In the beginning of March 1974, Herman Wold had visited Alva and Gunnar at The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California, where both Alva and Gunnar were visiting professors, to discuss some questions. During this visit the question of Weber's possible influence came up. In a letter of March 12th, Herman Wold wrote:

"I have done some reading in the books Gunnar gave me, and am grateful for the references to specific passages. In 'An American Dilemma', page 1057 I was pleased to see the reference to Louis Wirth, where footnote (a) brings us back to Karl Mannheim and Max Weber's pathbreaking ideas about the explicit specification of value premises in the social sciences. Then Gunnar's Appendix brought an avalanche of new ideas."

In the margin to this passage Gunnar wrote "never" and in his answer of March 21st, 1974, you can read in a PS:

"The specific question – if I understood it rightly, raised by somebody else without you having had the time yet to check on it – implying that I had learned more from Max Weber than I admit, which is a very serious accusation, I felt a little ashamed to take up carefully."

"I am touchy on this score. I have always prided myself on highest professional generosity towards other authors, and carefulness, clarity and honesty, when having to criticize them. Whatever personal faults I might have, in this regard I have been scrupulous."

"I mean also that for one who, *in an important context*, has said what you reported, should be under the duty to account for his views in print, so that I could answer."

"I was spurred to think through my intellectual relations to Max Weber. On separate pages – which are not necessarily confidential as this very personal letter – I shall go through them more thoroughly."

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"To understand, why I have put labor into this very marginal question, you have to realize that I felt it as a blow to my pride in craftsmanship. In my files it can serve as a footnote to my *Instead of Memoirs*. "

The separate pages (enclosed with this paper, see Appendix) Gunnar Myrdal called *Max Weber and Myrdal*. Here he tells us how he read Weber as a young boy, and how he later did not find anything he could use for his *The Political Element*. Hägerström he had met three times. He also tells us how he became friends with Karl Mannheim, who took the initiative to the English translation.

In a letter of April 9th, Gunnar writes:

"Look again on the book of Max Weber I referred to which is related to the methodological value problem. It is as usual highly speculative, and not directed very much on what you and I mean by social science research on facts and the causal relations between facts and not operative."

"I have no plans to publish my notes on Myrdal and Max Weber. If I ever should think of writing a paper on Weber, I would, of course, give it less self-centered accent, than I had reason to do on your question."

On April 18th, Wold answered:

"I was very happy to get your letter of April 9, thank you. On my bookshelf I have the 17 volumes of The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1968) and I have now checked Max Weber and some other articles to see what they say about explicit value premises. The closest formulation I found is (Vol. 16, p. 495): 'Weber's concept permitted him to assert the possibility of arriving at a scientific study of society by separating personal evaluation from scientific judgments. Although scientists may bring values and concepts to their subject matter, they must take care that they do not inadvertently confuse their own values and ideas with those of the actors they are studying.'"

"In practice W. I. Thomas' 'Polish peasant' (1918) evidently has played a big role; see 'The Concept of Values', Vol. 16, p. 285, but it was not before 1930 or later that his ideas became generally accepted.<sup>3</sup>"

Wold continued:

"As far as I can understand it is a commonly-held opinion that it is Max Weber who is the originator to the following thesis: 'Social sciences can be made objective if value premises are explicitly introduced among the premises of the analysis.' It is a very interesting question for the history of science if this thesis can be supported in Max Weber."

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<sup>3</sup> You cannot say from this correspondence if Wold was informed that Alva and Gunnar became very close friends of W. I. Thomas and his wife and research colleague Dorothy S. Thomas during their stay in the USA 1929–1930.

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A worried Gunnar Myrdal on April 29th asked:

"I am a little worried by the sentence you put within quotation marks. Whom are you quoting? I almost believed that I was the first man to introduce the term 'value premise'"

And so the discussion went on.

When Gunnar Myrdal in the autumn of 1974 received the Nobel Prize in economics, the Royal Swedish Academy of the Sciences especially mentioned three of his works: *An American Dilemma*, *Asian Drama* and *The Political Element*. About the last they said: "His book *The Political Element* was a pioneering critique of how political values in many areas of research are inserted into economic analysis."

This is just one example of how the correspondence can be used to help us understand important theoretical and historical questions of social sciences (and how to get a Nobel Prize). In this connection, I want to mention the correspondence between Gunnar Myrdal and the translators and/or publishers, where you can find discussions on concepts and meanings. Take *The Political Element* where, during the years 1930–1932, there are 88 letters from Gerhard Mackenroth to Gunnar, and 35 copies of letters from Gunnar to Mackenroth. (It was in this kind of correspondence that the concepts of *ex ante/ex post* were invented.) And, also not to forget, the important correspondence between Gunnar Myrdal and Karl Mannheim and of course Paul Streeten during the 1940's and 1950's.

Also important, of course, is the correspondence between Gunnar and all his colleagues; professors and scientists, politicians and members of governments, international civil servants, authors, and ordinary citizens, in Sweden and throughout the world.

*Documents in order of activities and work*, section 4, includes different kinds of documents such as memos, notes, background material, clippings and correspondence *kept together* and filed by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal covering the different activities or subjects they worked with. The titles of the different series in this section give a picture of what it is all about.

In section 5, *Collections*, you will find collections of clippings, reviews, photos, tapes, books etc. Some series are catalogued in computer-based registers.

*The Political Element* was like a bombshell in academic Sweden of 1930. The reviewers called it "The rebellion of youth", "The revolt of the young economists", etc. Some praised it, others were sceptical. The *Crisis in the Population Question* of 1934 was, if possible, a still bigger bomb in political Sweden. No book of popular social sciences and policy has ever been so discussed. The papers were filled with news of population, editorials and articles by experts and letters from the public, during the following years. Alva

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and Gunnar Myrdal decided to subscribe to all the clippings from Swedish newspapers in order to make a study of opinion. In all there is a collection of more than 30 volumes filled with clippings from November 1934 up till July 1938, in chronological order (series 5.1.1, vol. 006-040). Parts of this collection were already delivered to Arbetarrörelsens arkiv in the late 1940's, and during the mid 1970's became an important source for Allan C. Carlson's work on his dissertation. There are collections like this, for another example, from 1946, when Herbert Tingsten started his campaign against Gunnar Myrdal and the Swedish trade agreement with the Soviet Union.

The reactions to *An American Dilemma* were also considerable. There are hundreds of reviews that have been collected, but only three of which are in Swedish.

Both Alva and Gunnar Myrdal were eager readers of periodicals and daily newspapers. When they found their names mentioned, they tore out the articles and put them in a common pile. Here they also saved their printed speeches, articles, interviews etc. as well as the reviews of their own works. "The clippings are of course not at all complete. We just put what happens to come under our eyes in this pile.", Gunnar wrote in a letter to Arbetarrörelsens arkiv in 1973. The speeches, articles and interviews have now been separated in order to make them easy to access and are placed in section 2. The reviews have its own subseries, 5.1.2 under the series of clippings in section 5, *Collections*. Today the clippings consist of more than 230 volumes. With the help of the clippings it is quite easy to reconstruct the public lives of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal and the reactions to their activities.

The *Remainder*, the last section, just includes everything you cannot file in the other sections, like medals, diplomas etc. received by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal together with the awards and the prizes. Here you will also find a few things, such as an ashtray, a pipe, a small statue etc. that Gunnar had on his desk.

### Conclusion 2

In the archives of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal you will find a rich and unique material covering some of the most important questions from the twentieth century, if, as the Hungarian-American historian John Lukacs maintains in his recently published book *The End of the Twentieth Century and the End of the Modern Age*, this century lasted between 1914 and 1989.

And, in personal archives as Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's you very often will find documents which are complementary to those in the archives of institutions and organizations.

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And, of course, in no other sources can you find collected as informative documents on Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's lives and works as in their own archives.

### Appendix

#### Max Weber and Myrdal

By Gunnar Myrdal. (Enclosure to letter from Gunnar Myrdal to Herman Wold 1974–03-21.)

In *Objectivity in Social Research*, built on a lecture in response to “give a brief and simplified account of the conclusions I have reached on the problem of dealing with valuations in social research,” I was specifically “also asked to account for the way in which I have reached those conclusions through various research experiences”. In a section titled “A Personal Note”, I mentioned, in response to the latter request, Hagerstrom but not Max Weber.

Hagerstrom “exerted a strong influence in the critical direction on the academic youth in Sweden and strengthened my critical attitude to all types of thinking in terms of objective values” – an influence much stronger than any other person has had on Swedish young intellectuals since then.

This was a correct answer to the question and no falsification at all.

In the course of finally preparing my manuscript for publication of *The Political Element*, when I checked up on the literature even outside the classical and neoclassical line, mainly up till then confined to English and, to an extent, French and Austrian writers, I also read Max Weber's posthumous book, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*. I then inserted two paragraphs on him (pp. 12–13):

Max Weber, that great scholar who made lasting contributions in so many fields of social research, was also one of the first to stress forcefully the principle that economics, if it is to be scientific, must be kept *wertfrei*, i. e. free of values. His fundamental critique is transcendental and based upon modern German logic. His views are set forth mainly in his critical commentary on the Marxian conceptions of history and society, and on the German socio-political school of economists. As a result of the efforts of Schmoller, Schaffle, and Wagner, this school had become increasingly normative with a bias towards reforms. In the course of time it had also become doctrinaire, though this fate had threatened it from the start.

It is not surprising that Weber never proceeded to a critique of the political speculation in classical and neoclassical economic theory. Economic theorizing was not encouraged in Germany in his days. Indeed, it continued to be regarded as only remotely interesting until very recently, when a fresh start in theoretical

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research was made; this reawakening of interest was due, in no small measure, to the influence of Cassel's *Theoretische Socialoeconomie* published at the end of the Great War. Moreover, Weber was more of a sociologist and historian than an economic theorist.

This is a quite correct characterization of Weber on this point. I had already as a schoolboy read with admiration some of Weber's works on Protestantism, Capitalism, "Marxism", the German School of Economists, and this explains the reference in the beginning of the quote to his "lasting contributions". Later I have become more skeptical against these sweeping and highly speculative thoughts; see below. Even at that time, Weber's involved way of expressing himself, even when explaining his *general* denouncement of value-loaded concepts in research, appealed to me less than Hagerstrom's principal, clear and simple "value relativism".

In particular I found nothing of the systematic critique I was trying to carry out in *The Political Element*. He had himself not carried out such a critique, and he had not even hinted to the need of it, still less produced a theoretical model for how it should be done: by searching for the hidden valuations which must result in a logical non-sequitur. Through the course of my study I had thus nothing to quote from Weber, and – on this methodological issue – not from any other author either. In regard to the method of criticism, I happened to be original.

This is how I described the method, which I then meticulously followed out, from the first chapter (page 13):

More often ... the norms are suppressed and appear only implicitly in the specific political recommendations presented as a result of economic analysis .... The tenability of a given theory must be tested on the basis of its own premises. Only a critique which is immanent in this sense can carry conviction. We must make explicit and then scrutinize the long chain of premises and inferences which underlie the glibly accepted formulae of political economy.

Neither had Hagerstrom enlarged upon the need to follow up his general "value relativism" by developing the method of systematic, logical, immanent criticism of the body of economic theory. Indeed, in the position he took to his pupil Lundstedt, he had remained too uncritical against Lundstedt's use of maximum social utility in his *de lege ferenda* analysis.

(I remember from the last of my three personal meetings with Hagerstrom that I brought up this question, which embarrassed him. When I went on and urged that he and generally the philosophers should provide us in the social sciences with the type of methodological tool of immanent criticism I had tried to use, he agreed as also to my request that they should define the type of sociological and psychological inquiry, by which we can locate the sources of biases in research. But he meant that we ourselves were nearer to find and test out our own methods. With my approaches he felt in sympathy and said he would want to come back

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to these methodological problems in a new paper, that was never written before he died.)

At the time of writing *The Political Element* I still believed, like Weber (and many other authors in the classical tradition as I had just pointed out in the text before the quotation about Weber), that there could be an economic theory “free of values”. That view changed when I worked on *An American Dilemma* and faced the problem of common and large-scale biases in the literature on the white-black relations. This I explained later in the Preface to the English edition of *The Political Element* in the following way (pp. vii and viii):

The book is devoted almost entirely to criticism. The suggestions in the last chapter for a positive solution of the problem, on how to introduce valuations into economic analysis and thus make it possible to draw political conclusions on a scientific basis, are very sketchy, although I still believe that they point in the right direction; these ideals have been further developed, particularly in *An American Dilemma*. I still consider the criticism correct and worth doing. But throughout the book there lurks the idea that when all metaphysical elements are radically cut away, a healthy body of positive economic theory will remain, which is altogether independent of valuations. Political conclusions can then be inferred simply by adding to the objective scientific knowledge of the facts a chosen set of value premises.

This implicit belief in the existence of a body of scientific knowledge acquired independently of all valuations is, as I now see it, naive empiricism. Facts do not organize themselves into concepts and theories just by being looked at; indeed, except within the framework of concepts and theories, there are no scientific facts but only chaos. There is an inescapable *a priori* element in all scientific work. Questions must be asked before answers can be given. The questions are an expression of our interest in the world, they are at bottom valuations. Valuations are thus necessarily involved already at the stage when we observe facts and carry on theoretical analysis, and not only at the stage when we draw political inferences from facts and valuations.

I have therefore arrived at the belief in the necessity of working always, from the beginning to the end, with explicit value premises. The value premises cannot be established arbitrarily: they must be relevant and significant for the society in which we live. To begin with, they must be made concrete in terms of economic interests actually pursued by groups of people, and of real human attitudes to social processes. Under no circumstances should the value premises in realistic research be represented by the sort of general and abstract principles of which the economists in our great tradition of natural law and utilitarianism avail themselves to bridge the gulf between objective science and politics. This is why the immanent criticism of economic doctrines, contained in the present volume, remains not only valid but relevant and useful, in spite of my philosophical

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naivete in the wider question of how to base objective research on subjective valuations.

In *An American Dilemma* I had referred to the immanent critique of economic theory in *The Political Element*, and I there complimented it by a similar critical analyses of American sociology up to that time (Appendix 2, pp. 1045–1058). As I had not relied upon Weber in my earlier immanent critique of economic theory, and could not do so as he had not carried out any such critique and developed how to do it, I had no reason to refer to Weber and, indeed, still less so since I had then left behind me the idea about a *Wertfrei* social science.

(To my knowledge, I have only in a discussion in *Ekonomisk Tidskrift*, which I have not available, with a Swedish philosopher, whose name I cannot remember, critized Weber, – and then only for his tendency to believe in the possibility of a logical hierarchy of values – though my memoray is vague.)

In a paper on “The Relation between Social Theory and Social Policy” I wrote (p. 54):

The thesis that social science like every other branch of human endeavour is, as a matter of fact, conditioned by the valuations prevalent in society which form its cultural environment, was, however developed into a sociology of science by two great German social scientists, Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. It is for social science itself to draw the rational consequences of this insight for its methods of observation and analysis. The most important thing is to make this unavoidable conditioning a conscious and deliberate situation, to change an uncontrolled general bias into a set of explicit and specific viewpoints.

There I was following an urge to be generous or, in any case, did not stress where I differed. Weber’s Sociology of Science was not measuring up to my requests for such a sociology (and social psychology). It did not focus on the biases; and did not, as I then already saw it, provide such a model, accounting for that type of hypotheses that could be tested by empirical research in a contemporary setting – see my last book, *Against the Stream*, Chapter IV, “The Need for a Sociology and Psychology of Social Science and Scientists”.

Even Weber’s grandiose historico-philosophical speculations, which I had so admired as a schoolboy, had lost its fascination on me as a working scientist. When in *Asian Drama* I had to deal with Caste, I could not find any use for Weber’s writings. I approached the problem as a scientist focusing my interest on observable facts, including the rationalizations by people in various strata.

Incidentally, it was Mannheim, then in England, who took the initiative to get an English edition of *The Political Element* translated (about my reluctance at that time to do anything to spread my books, see the Preface to the new Swedish edition).

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(We met several times and became friends. He had promised to write a Forward to the English edition of the book; but he died before it was published. What he wanted to say in that Forward was:

- That I had done what Weber and he had not done: produced an immanent critique of the theories and developed a method how to do it on the logical plane.
- That he agreed to my thesis that a *wertfrei* social science is unthinkable.
- And that I was right in my demand for the elaboration of a methodology of utilizing a set of instrumental value premises, explicitly stated and rationally founded in social reality itself, the apparatus of which I had first developed in *An American Dilemma*, Appendix 2, Section 4.)

In regard more specifically to Weber, I may at most be upbraided for not having taken up the positions of Weber for critical treatment, as I came further and further away from his thoughts. But even initially, i.e. in *The Political Element*, my only agreement with Weber at that time, (though not later) was the thought I then shared with him and many others, that theory should be *wertfrei*. When even later I did not take up Weber for criticism, the explanation, though not necessarily a justification, was that Weber was so far away from my thoughts and from the thoughts of those I had to criticize in regard to problems I was dealing with. I now got a spur to, at least, outline such a criticism.