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Syllabus: The Swedish Welfare State Model in Comparative Perspective.

This course scrutinizes the development and viability of the Swedish welfare state from a comparative and historical perspective. Northwestern European welfare states have many features in common. The modern welfare state did not originate in Sweden, which was one of the poorest countries in Europe a century ago, but the country was “ahead of the crowd” after the 2nd world war, and thus pioneering both the construction of a modern welfare state as well as its realignment in response to fiscal stress and legitimacy problems, matching a globalized economy, in recent years. Swedish economic history is a success history until the mid 70s, thereafter relatively successful in adapting to new conditions.

Sweden is very much an Americanized society, except for its political culture, which rather appears as an extreme contrast. This makes Sweden very attractive as a case for comparative studies, which is reflected in several works, in various substantial fields, such as comparative health care, regulation, and housing.

This course provides basic insights in the conceptual tools and methods for the comparative study of welfare states and their development.

It accounts for various definitions, dimensions and formative factors in the shaping of the Swedish welfare state.

It accounts for the many diverse roots of the Swedish welfare state, its formative moments, and its growth to limits.

It accounts for variations in principles for welfare distribution and their effects for various collectives.

It provides an introduction to the many dimensions of private vs public at local and state levels and accounts for cases of privatization and decentralization.

It emphasizes the central role of labour market relations and wage policy for the success and crises for the so-called Swedish model.

It accounts for how the Swedish welfare state has been conceived of, as a case to follow (“Middle way” between capitalism and socialism) or a warning example of deteriorating economy and “atomized” civil society (with high suicide rate etc).

It provides basic knowledge about the party system, the role of popular mass movements, “special interests” and their organizations, often discussed in terms of “neo-corporatism”.

It discusses the role of the Swedish labour party, which significantly has been more successful than in many neighbouring countries, and its interplay with the main unions in the labour market, as well as the recurring tensions within the party itself.

Sweden’s constitutional traditions, will be accounted for, in terms of the effects on the shaping of the welfare state, as well as some realignment problems when Sweden entered the European Union.

The viability of the Swedish model will be scrutinized from a historical and sociological perspective, and in the light of the concept of “political culture”.

Academic Aims

The course provides insights in the conceptual tools and methods for the comparative study of welfare states and their development.

It further provides knowledge about the history, structure and content of the Swedish case, as well as its inherent tensions.

It provides theories and concepts and classifications, such as those by Titmuss, Esping-Andersen, and Peter Flora and his collaborators.

Elucidates the discourse formation, i.e. the development of the discourse from Lutheran social reform creed and social engineering (e.g., the Myrdals) onwards, and, moreover, provides a sense of the reciprocity between various intellectual ambiances (such as Chicago, Berlin, London and Stockholm) in the shaping of that cumulative discourse.

Illustrates the scope of politics vs other factors in the development to a modern welfare state.

Learning outcome

The students will not only acquire knowledge about the background of the Swedish welfare state, how it emerged and developed, how it is actually shaped in various social policy fields, and the development of its social policy discourse, but also be able to analyze variations in welfare state design, with regard to variations in historically determined political culture, viability as well as distributive justice and effects on civility. They will have a sense of the welfare discourse as a cumulative endeavor, as well as its ideological denotations. They will also have a sense of the importance as well as limits of politics as an explanatory variable in social science, and of the significance for recent debates, such as the so-called “Third way” (Giddens), and central principled historical argumentations, such as a planned economy as a threat to liberty (Hayek). Various aspects of recent legitimation crises, generated by such modern phenomena as “free riders” and an alleged “moral deficit”, decline of state power and the ensuing erosion of the taxation bases. The students will also have the ability to form an opinion of the Swedish case as a paradigm for developing economies “in transition”.

General introductory readings:

Esping-Andersen, Gösta: *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford Univ Press, 1999.

Flora, Peter: From “Introduction”, in Flora, Peter (ed): *Growth to Limits. The West European Welfare State Since World War II*. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986- Vol 1-5.

Lane, Jan-Erik (ed.): *Understanding the Swedish Model*. London: Frank Cass, 1990. (most contributions also available in *West European Politics*, Vol. 14, No 3, July 1991).

Olsson, Sven E: *Social Policy and Welfare State in Sweden*. Lund: Arkiv, 1990. 2nd ed. 1993.

Wolfe, A: *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation*. Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1989.

Sessions outline:

1. Course Introduction. Theoretical points of departure and central themes. Special features of Swedish Political Culture.

Except for a brief account of the peculiarities of the Swedish political culture and its historical background and resulting “special features”, we identify some cross-cutting themes relevant to the comparative perspective, such as: The concept of the welfare state. The so-called Titmuss’s triad, The proper scope of the state? Privatization of ownership. Principles of value allocation and taxation. Does politics matter? The role of social democracy? The legitimacy of the welfare state (including threats from globalization, neo-corporatism and "iron triangles", and various credibility problems, generated by European integration and changing demographic patterns). The role of institutions and voluntary associations. The comparative approach of Peter Flora is outlined, as is the taxonomy of welfare regimes suggested by Esping-Andersen.

Literature:

“Introduction” (subchapters 1-4) to the Flora (ed.1986)-volumes on *Growth to Limits*.

Esping-Andersen, Gosta (1999), pp 73-94, “Comparative Welfare Regimes Re-examined”, in Esping-Andersen (1999).

Flora, Peter & Heidenheimer, Arnold (1990), pp 17-36, Part One: “What is the Welfare State?”, in Flora & Heidenheimer (eds, 1990).

Flora, Peter & Alber, Jens: “Modernization, Democratization, and the Developments of Modern Welfare States in Western Europe”, pp 37-80, in Flora & Heidenheimer (eds, 1990).

Handouts.

2. The Swedish Welfare State Model: Definitions, aspects and transitions.

There are several characteristics, such as consensus-culture, and several roots, such as egalitarianism in old peasant society. This is for instance reflected in the complex provenance of the concept of "Folkhemmet" (The people's home), the origin of which is still obscure.

However, labour market relations are at the core of the Swedish model and characteristic of the so-called “mixed economy” as a synthesis between capitalism and socialism, free enterprise and central planning.

Some twelve definitions and some five roots are accounted for. This session also accounts for the internal dynamics (driving forces) in the Swedish welfare state model.

Lit:

Olsson-Hort,¹ Sven E: “Welfare Policy in Sweden”, pp 71-86 in Boje and Olsson-Hort (eds, 1993).

Olof Petersson (1991)

Handouts.

¹ This author has changed his name twice, from Olsson, to Olsson-Hort, to Hort.

3. The Emergence of the Swedish Welfare State and Swedish Social Policy reforms during the 20th century

There are old – and diverse - roots, such as the centralized nation state founded on taxation and central bureaucracy, as well as the peasants fairly strong position in a never fully feudalized Sweden, which makes Sweden an almost exceptional case in Europe

Early educational reforms as well as the role of popular mass movements, such as consumers' and producers' cooperation, teetotalers, religious non-conformism and the labour unions, all contribute to the infrastructure that the modern Swedish welfare state and its voluntary associations (including political "grass root" parties) draw on.

The early 30s is the formative moment for the Swedish model, in the wake of the Ådalen-events (1931) and the Kreuger debacle (March 1932, the depression hit Sweden) and the ensuing social democratic victory in the next election, following a "trade off" between peasants and workers. There is, however, a number of preceding crucial formative moments.

The actual reforms are accounted for, work life reforms, social insurance, retirement schemes, etc. The Swedish system is - with some notable exceptions - characterized by a combination of universalism and the principle of income loss compensation, reflecting a class compromise between white and blue collar categories, promoting social peace and non-conflict wage negotiating culture.

Lit.:

Stig Hadenius (1990)

Leif Lewin (1988).

Sven E Olsson (1993, esp. "Introduction: Facets of Welfare State Developments")

Franklin Scott (1988, the chapter on the Swedish model)

4. Labour market relations and Solidaristic Wage policy. "Rise, Demise and Reconstruction of the Swedish Welfare State"

"From class struggle to the Spirit of Saltsjöbaden", and "From The Spirit of Saltsjöbaden to 'Growth to limits'". Organized special interests are strong in Sweden but also more oriented towards the public welfare rather than exclusively trade-unionist goals.

No matter how the Swedish model is described and specified, the core element of peaceful labour market relations between employer and employees is the main explanation for the relative success of the Swedish model. Between the so-called Saltsjöbaden-agreements (1938 main year) and well into the 70s there were few strikes. The peak of the Swedish model occurred during the mid 60s. The 70s brought sand into the machinery.

The so called solidaristic income policy practiced by the big centralized organisations on both sides in central negotiations was very momentous and also changed Swedish society (increased concentration and centralisation).

The 70s were characterized by a number of "wild cat" strikes and also more conflict than consensus in the negotiation culture ("From consensus and 'prisoners

dilemma' to 'chicken races"); as well as framework, with more of decentralized negotiations.

The "wage earners' fund"-debate and ensuing legislation also was a hard blow to the traditional consensus between ideological right and left, a return to "block politics".

The development of Swedish labour market relations is accounted for, as well as the way the solidaristic income policy actually functioned, contributing not to only to a rather egalitarian income structure but also to rationalization, productivity-increase, capital accumulation in big enterprise, etc.

The relation between organizations and parties have undergone significant changes since the mid 70s.

Lit:

Mancur Olsson (1982)

Stig Hadenius (1990)

Handouts.

5. The Welfare State Discourse in Sweden

The role of the intellectuals is an interesting theme in its own right, because of the significant and intense contacts between Sweden and the USA, Sweden and Germany and Sweden and the UK. The Myrdals are examples of all three. The migration of social thought is promoted by Rockefeller money, establishing the social survey in Sweden and financing the first professorship in social policy (Gösta Bagge in Stockholm). There are also close contacts between politicians and academia, radical intellectuals having immediate access to power and in several cases (again the Myrdals, as well as Bagge who became conservative party leader, and Ohlin who became the liberal leader) pursuing double careers. Social engineering and democracy is one crucial theme; in many ways much needed reforms in areas such as housing, health care, education and hygiene were implemented in a "top-down" rather than "bottom up"-way.

The eugenics debate following the Myrdals' book *The Crisis in the Population Question* is one good example; it was not really an urgent task to consult those immediately concerned. A theme of authoritarianism vs open society in early social engineering reappears here (it was embryonic and visible already soon after the French Revolution).

The Swedish reform path has been imprinted by so called "functional socialism", with its roots in the philosophy of Axel Hägerström and his many followers, such as Vilhelm Lundstedt, Karl Olivecrona and Gunnar Myrdal.

Three highlights are the debate about the planned economy after the 2nd World War, the retirement schemes-debate in the 50s, and the wage earners' fund-debate in the 70s and early 80s. The role of the intellectuals, with the time-typical conflux of intellectual and political clout, probably peaked just before the Second World War.

Lit:

Sven E Olsson(1993, the chapter "Before Social Democracy: The early formation of a social policy discourse in Sweden").

Eyerman (1985)

Lyon (2000)
 Eliaeson (2000)
 Hoch (1987)
 Handouts.

6. Privatization and decentralization, private vs public, etc.

The financing of the modern welfare state depends upon taxes as well as users' fees, which is an ideologically "hot topic", esp. on the local government level. "Liberty vs equality" is one slogan to catch the core.

Swedes are used to housing being subsidized (has changed dramatically in recent years), health care and education being financed over the tax system instead of out of the pocket. Tuition fees unknown. Session will include cultures of taxation and local government (with taxation rights of their own in Sweden).

Problems of economic stress tend to become decentralized to the local level, which in Sweden has a quite special imprint by the tradition of local self-government. This is a theme on many levels of analysis, from philosophical aspects to very much "hands on" aspects, such as how to divide the costs for facilities, such as heating, water supply, the fire brigade, etc. In the UK "contracting out" is a key concept. What is genuinely private and what is public?

Session includes various modes of value allocation and welfare distribution, with social insurance design and health care as main examples.

Lit:

Elander & Montin (1990)

Giersch (1997)

Olsson (1993, esp. chapter IV, "The Dialectics of Decentralization and Privatization).

Wicksell, Knut: (to become specified later)

Handouts

7. The Debate on the planned economy.

This is the most central long term debate from the point of view of economic and democratic principles, reoccurred in various guises at formative moments and peaked after the war, with an ideological confrontation between social democrats and bourgeois parties. Sweden pioneered in Keynesian budgetary policy well before Keynes, the theoretical foundation laid by the so-called Stockholm school in economics (Myrdal, Hammar skjöld, Ohlin, E Heckscher).

Influenced by Hayek the bourgeois felt that the combination of war-time planning and taxation threatened to create something irreversible, and far more intrusive than free enterprise was used to accommodate to. At the time Gunnar Myrdal formed a sort of one man "shadow cabinet" within the social democratic party (The Myrdal Commission), yet representing socialist planning in the public mind. His main opponent was the liberal economist and party leader Bertil Ohlin, a colleague within the so-called Stockholm school of economics. Already 1932 the new social democratic government had applied

Keynesian economics “before Keynes”, again Myrdal playing a crucial role, in actually shaping the budget for Wigforss, the main socialist ideologist and secretary of finance.

The obvious ideological dimensions of this debate reappear in the retirement scheme debate in the 50s and the wage earners' fund debate two decades later.

Lit:

Lewin (1988)

Stig Hadenius (1990)

Handouts.

8. The Legitimacy of the Modern Welfare State.

The Swedish political system was in the 20th century one of stability, with five parties and mostly strong social democratic *minority* governments. Since more than a decade this pattern has changed, new (populist and environmentalist) parties entering the parliament and the political center drastically weakened.

It has become harder to form stable majority governments – and to the extent it is possible they are less efficient anyway, since the implementation power of national state governments diminishes and the state even is eroding as obvious basic unit for analysis.

Similar trends are manifested in for instance Germany (Weizsäcker's and Hennis's criticism of the established parties, so called "Parteiverdrößenheit"-debate). However, this development results in a situation the Americans have for longed lived with, more attuned to Ancient Greek - and Swiss - ideals of democracy, as well as in line with ideas developed by modern communitarianism (stress on civil society rather than the state). In Sweden, however, the diminishing power of the parties as well as diminishing engagement especially among youth in party organization (replaced by "ad hoc-crazy" rather than democracy) has been a frustrating experience, due to an identification with state and society, in a small centralized homogeneous and egalitarian peasant society (urbanization was a very rapid process in Sweden).

Recent debate is accounted for as well as aspects of political sociology and elementary traits in the Swedish electoral system and electorate. Related themes: Citizenship, parties and institutions. Strong state *vs* civil society? Risk society and the nation state. Recent ideas by Offe, Giddens, Beck and Putnam have obvious relevance for this theme.

The decline of the traditional welfare state has caused reactions of various kind, mostly reflecting renewed tensions within a social democratic party, with eroding class basis. We find Romantic “Dinosaur”-reactions as well as reactions to the democratic deficit in the process of Europeanization and globalization.

In many respects the welfare state project historically appears as a national project, which does not quite match the underlying creed of universal solidarity.

Lit:

Rothstein (1996)

Sainsbury (1991), in *West European Politics*, Vol 14 (July 1991), no 3. Special Issue on Understanding the Swedish Model, ed. by Jan-Erik Lane.

Tilton (1991)

9. “The population question”. Family, Nation and Welfare. Dimensions of power distribution and distributive justice (gender issues, affirmative action, positive discrimination, the situation of immigrants, effects on retirement funding).

An update of recent Swedish debate, in comparative perspective (the European problem situation much the same, while principled debate seems to relate to American experience and debate). For instance, how to define "community" is a perennial topic ever since Aristotle. Topics of "just institutions", the legitimate scope of the state and democracy are of obvious relevance here.

The relation between family policy, employment, demography, retirement scheme debate and gender issues are obvious.

Feminism has been called a new state ideology in Sweden. Immigration is a “hot topic”, despite the country’s relative lack of populist outbursts on the party agenda. The recently realigned retirement system has a low credibility, being openly criticized by the former secretary of finance Mr Feldt as “wishful thinking”. Similar skepticism has been aired in Germany by Alt-Kanzler Helmut Schmidt, one indication of many that this is an all European problem.

The Swedish welfare state model has been conceived of from various - often ideologically suffused - perspectives. One example, of many, is the alleged family decline in Sweden. Several of the traditional functions of the family have been socialized, for instance teachers taking over some of the roles of the parents. The intermediary network structure between a centralized anonymous state power and atomized individuals is damaged, critics claim. The intentions of the reforms in the 30s rather were to *strengthen* the family; although some reforms perhaps turned out to be a toxic cure. There is a potential goal conflict between the liberation and self-realization of women, now in the position to recast their lives, and preserved patterns of socialization and reproduction.

Work force immigration has been suggested as one way out of a dilemma to upheld retirement scheme – and it is to be foreseen that this alternative will not be particularly enthusiastically embraced by the electorate.

Lit:

Ginsburg (2001), pp 195-222, in *Comparing Welfare States*.

Titmuss

Rothstein (1998)

Eduards, Maud (1991)

Hammar, Thomas (1991)

Popenoe, David: “Family Decline in the Swedish Welfare State”, in *The Public Interest*.

10. Sweden entering the European Union: Problems and prospects.

This session will discuss some problems generated by the particular Swedish political culture when we adjust to joint European regulations. Session will deal with problems of European integration and include topics of environmentalism, legal culture, public access to official documents, minority rights, as well as the more philosophical background in

Scandinavian legal realism (Axel Hägerström, Vilhelm Lundstedt, Karl Olivecrona - and also Gunnar Myrdal).

The philosophical basis for Swedish social engineering draws on what is known abroad as Scandinavian legal realism, with Axel Hägerström as founding father - and Olivecrona, Lundstedt and also Myrdal as apostles. Hägerström's so called nihilism - right or wrong - is not lockstepping with European legal tradition and generates a so called "populist-problem", which is, moreover, built into the Swedish constitution.

Related themes: Nordic cooperation vs European integration, security policy (reorientation and division of labour), environmental problems, constitutionalism and role of citizenship.

Lit:

To become specified:

From Boje (ed),

Gunnar Myrdal (1983),

Material from The Swedish Institute.

Handouts

11. The Changing Image of the Swedish Welfare State Model abroad.

This a long story. Marquis Childs's *Sweden: The Middle Way*, from the mid-30s focused on the so called mixed economy and the consensus culture, while Roland Huntford's *The Blind Totalitarians* from the early 70s elucidated another element, from a more critical perspective, Swedish social engineering as a model far from the open society vision. "Swedish social history" was used by Bush sr in his electoral campaign a decade ago as a derogatory concept. In the UK Sweden has also played a role in public debate, with ideological overtones, for instance in various articles in *The Guardian*. In Germany, with even more of "Swedish" problems of realignment than Sweden itself, Sweden has served as a prototype in the public debate for the adjustment of the welfare state to new economic realities.

However, the market is just as strong a threat against civility as the state. Moreover, Sweden has an astonishing amount of civil voluntary associations, ready to fill in the gap after the "petrified" parties.

In international debate "Less state, more markets" is replaced by "less state, more civil society" as in the analyses by Offe, Habermas and Wolfe; to the latter Sweden is a crucial case.

Lit:

Childs (1936 and 1980)

Huntford (1972)

Wolfe (1988), esp. chapt 5.

Gunnar Myrdal (1983)

Mancur Olson (1982)

von Kreitor (1994)

Dahl (1994)

12. Dead and Alive in the Swedish Model? What can we learn from the Swedish experience? Future? Problems and prospects? Third way in Sweden?

In this session we reconnect to current international debate: What would the feedback from the Swedish case be in this larger context??? (What lessons to learn?). There seems to be a tension between globalization and the sort of protectionism that promoted the welfare state in its traditional form in North Western Europe.

However, despite its slow demise the Swedish experience still might provide exemplars to follow in many areas of social policy, not the least “East of Elbe”, in fields such as road safety, environment regulations, health care and Mother care, anti-drug policies, etc.

Sweden has, moreover and after all, been relatively successful in the realignment of its economic infrastructure after the mid 70s and has, moreover, fared through dangerous periods of currency unrest and fiscal deficit crises on the state level and realigned party structure, with preserved stability and relative prosperity.

Several rapid changes have occurred during the last decade, most of them also in Sweden in the direction of marketization and privatization.

Lit.:

Material from The Swedish Institute
Handouts

Teaching and examination.

The teaching consists of one formal lecture and one work-shop every week during twelve weeks. Normal rules for active participation apply to the course. The grading is based upon oral as well as written assignments, with emphasis on presentation of reaction-papers and essay-writing.

Set titles for term papers:

1. Democracy the Swedish Way (dealing with legitimacy of the welfare state and structural crises of representative government)
2. How to explain Sweden's development from one of the poorest to one of the richest nations in Europe?
3. Swedish labor market relations; the core of the Swedish model.
4. The intellectuals and social engineering. (e.g. the Myrdals).
5. Dead or alive in the Swedish Model?
6. Sweden in the world: in search of new identity.
Or according to prior agreement.

Literature:

Björk, Ragnar: “Social Change, Scholarship, and Gunnar Myrdal. Reflections on the 1920s”, pp 87-110, in *Societies made up of History. Essays in historiography, intellectual history, professionalisation, historical social theory & proto-industrialization*, ed by Ragnar Björk & Karl Molin. *Festschrift to Rolf Torstendahl*. Edsbruk: Akademitryck AB, 1996.

- Boje, Thomas P & Olsson Hort, Sven E (eds): *Scandinavia in a New Europa*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1993.
- Broberg, Gunnar and Roll-Hansen, Nils (eds): *Eugenics and the Welfare State. Sterilization Policy in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland*. Michigan State University Press, 1997.
- Childs, M: *Sweden. The Middle Way*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1936.
- “-: *The Middle Way on Trial*. New Haven: Yale Univ Press, 1980.
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- Dahl, Göran: “The Swedish Model and the Conservative Revolution: Response to von Kreitor”, in *TELOS*, no 100 (Summer 1994), pp 134-42.
- Eduards, Maud: “The Swedish Gender Model: Productivity, Pragmatism and Paternalism”, pp 166-181, in Lane (1991, ed).
- Elander, Ingemar & Montin, Stig: "Decentralisation and Social Control: Central and Local Government Relations in Sweden", in *Policy and Politics*, Vol 18 (1990), no 3, pp 165-80.
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- Flora, Peter (Ed.): *Growth to Limits. The West European Welfare States Since World War II*. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986- Vol 1-5.
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- Hammar, Thomas: “‘Cradle of Freedom on Earth’: Refugee Immigration and Ethnic Pluralism”, pp 182-96, in Lane (1991, ed).
- Hoch, Paul: “Migration and the Generation of New Scientific Ideas”, in *Minerva* 1987, pp 209-37.
- von Kreitor, Nikoloaj-Klaus” “The ‘Conservative Revolution’ in Sweden”, in *TELOS*, no 98-9 (Winter and Spring 1994), pp 249-54.
- “-: “The Political Idea of the People’s Home: Reply to Goran Dahl”, *Op. cit.*: pp 143-56.
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- Lindbeck, Assar et al: *Power and accountability in Swedish Politics*. Sthlm: SNS, 2000.
- Lash, Scott & Urry, John: *The End of Organized Capitalism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1987.
- Lewin, Leif: *Ideology and Strategy: a Century of Swedish Politics*. Cambridge: CUP, 1988.

- Lyon, E Stina: "Education for Modernity: The Impact of American Social Science on Alva and Gunnar Myrdal and the 'Swedish Model' of School Reform", pp 513-37, in *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol 14, No 3, Spring 2001 (with symposium on "Alva and Gunnar Myrdal: A Symposium on Their Lives and Works").
- Olsson-Hort, Sven E: *Social Policy and Welfare State in Sweden*. Lund: Arkiv, 1993. 2nd ed., orig. 1990.
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- Wickell, Knut: A text on his principles for taxation, to become specified later.
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- Wolfe, A: *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation*. Berkeley, Univ. of Calif. Press, 1989.

Further references:

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