5. SLOTOPMERKINGEN

Het is te verwachten, dat de betekenis van de sociaal-wetenschappelijke advisering (interne en externe vorm) in de komende jaren eerder toe dan af zal nemen 30. Wil een dergelijke ontwikkeling meer worden dan een korte schijnbloci, dan zal met name aan de technische kant van de advisering meer aandacht besteed moeten worden, overigens zonder dat daarbij gedacht behoeft te worden aan een erg omvangrijk instrumentarium zoals b.v. voor het sociaal onderzoek is ontwikkeld. Over de huidige omvang is weinig bekend. De Boer 31 geeft, onder voorbehoud, aan de hand van het jaarboekje van de V.S.W.O., een aanknopingspunt. Volgens hem werkt 50 à 60% van de leden en potentiële leden der V.S.W.O. in een adviesfunctie t.b.v. de overheid. Wat het bedrijfsleven en particuliere niet-commerciële organisaties betreft zijn helemaal geen recente gegevens beschikbaar. Wil men de ontwikkeling kunnen volgen, dan zal ook op dit punt onderzoek nodig zijn.

VENSTER OP HET BUITENLAND

THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND

door J. A. BANKS

Although complete courses on the subject are provided at four English Universities 1, and although it forms part of the sociology curriculum elsewhere, it cannot be claimed that the sociology of religion is a striking feature of British sociology. There are, for example, no University departments which organise team research into its problems, as is the case with industrial sociology, and there is no widespread interest in it among individual scholars up and down the country, as is the case with the sociology of education. As a subject in its own right it simply does not fire the imagination of English sociologists; and while it may be claimed that this is probably true of the sociology of religion in most countries 2, it is all the more remarkable in the English case by reason of the impressive tradition of the subject in this country in the past. A very large part of the 'data of sociology' in Spencer's Principles of Sociology was composed of religious phenomena of one kind or another; Tyler's Primitive Culture was, similarly, largely concerned with religious and quasi-religious ideas; and from these

1 The Universities of the South West (Exeter), Leeds, London and Sheffield.
pioneers it is possible to trace a continuous line of development through
to the evolutionary theories of religion held by Hobhouse and Westermarck
on the one hand, and to the detailed comparison of religion and science in
the erudite volumes of Fraser on the other. Perhaps, indeed, it is the case
that this type of analysis was taken as far as it would go in such works as
*The Golden Bough, Totemism and Exogamy, The Belief in Immortality and
the Worship of the Dead,* and *The Worship of Nature* — the very titles are
redolent of a past age, but for all that, the explanation for the current lack
of interest in the sociology of religion does not lie at Fraser’s door, for
there are other traditions of the subject which were flourishing as late as
the 1930’s, and these too are languishing today.

Spencer’s work, as is well known, was also taken up and modified out of
all recognition by Durkheim, from whom it returned to England to be
developed further by Malinowski into the methodology of studying the
function of religious beliefs and practices as ‘always the core of civilization
and the mainspring of moral values . . . closely associated with every form
of organization at lower and at higher levels’ 3. Detailed studies, inspired by
this point of view, have been carried out by such social anthropologists as
Evans-Pritchard and Firth, but the lessons which might be drawn from
such works for the study of complex, industrialised societies have largely
been ignored by sociologists, especially as the gap between social anthro­
pology and sociology has broadened since 1939. At the same time, a com­
pletely different tradition, finding its origins in the work of Max Weber
and passed on into British social history by R. H. Tawney and his students,
Grubb, Warner and Bebb, has also been almost completely ignored by
sociologists, otherwise influenced by Weber himself. Hence, while social
anthropologists continue to maintain their tradition, and while social histo­
rarians continue to maintain theirs, seeking, for example, to trace the origins
of the trade union movement and of the Labour Party in the methodism
and nonconformism of the nineteenth century, sociologists have tended on
the whole to turn their back on a tradition which might equally be claimed
to be theirs, and look instead for their source of inspiration to the revival
of interest in the subject which has occurred in America and, especially,
France in recent times 4.

Foreign observers of contemporary British sociology might be tempted, it is
true, to regard this Continental and American basis for enthusiasm to be
typical of the subject generally. After all, British industrial sociology owes
more to Roethlisberger and Dixon, to Mayo, and to Moore, than it does
to the native work of Sargent Florence and the few empirically minded
British economists of the 1930’s. Even the sociology of education gets some
of its energy from America, although in this instance the emphasis on
social stratification probably owes more to the work of the statisticians and

3 B. Malinowski: ‘Sir James George Fraser’ in *A Scientific Theory of Culture and
In Malinowski’s view Fraser ‘never became aware of the social factor in folklore
and mythology’ ibid. p. 188.

4 For details see N. Birnbaum: ‘La sociologie de la Religion en Grande-Bretagne’,
*Archives de Sociologie des Religions* Vol. 1., No. 2, 1956, and N. Birnbaum:
’Sociologie der Kirchengemeinde in Grossbritannien’ in D. Goldschmidt, F. Grei­
demographers of the 1920's and 1930's. What is, in fact, particularly noticeable is the difference in the type of mind which is attracted to sociology today as compared with the past. From domination of the subject by men of primarily philosophical bent, such as Hobhouse and his successor Ginsberg, post-war sociology has attracted a growing number of empirically based investigators, whose interests are set in the framework of scientific rather than philosophical speculation. It should be emphasized that this distinction is methodological and epistemological but not normative. There is nothing to chose between the generation in terms of their views on the relationship between sociological theory and social policy. What has changed, and in such a fashion as to appear as a sharp break with the past, is the approach to the problem of how to obtain valid information which may be used for the sociological analysis of human behaviour.

Broad evolutionary and comparative studies have given way to more precise and narrowly confined investigations into relatively limited fields. Breadth of scope, based often on meagre evidence has been sacrificed for greater precision in the data, and although the contemporary sociologist certainly does not eschew sociological theory, as did some of the earlier social empiricists such as Charles Booth, he is much more ready to subordinate it to the painstaking collection and assessment of relevant fact than was his pre-war predecessor. It is also noteworthy that the empirical content of post-war sociology has resulted in a great deal of head counting, with an according interest in social structure, as contrasted with the pre-war interest not in individuals but in mass movements of ideas. This is true of sociology generally, but it has a special relevance for the sociology of religion.

An extreme example of the present fashion in the English approach to the sociology of religion will perhaps make the contrast clearer. In his study of the priests and parishioners of a Catholic parish in Liverpool, Dr. Conor Ward was interested in the opinions of the people he interviewed but only insofar as they provided information on their willingness to participate in parish societies and parish activities, and only insofar as these could provide information on what he chose regard as the extent of parish unity and group consciousness. He was not interested, as a sociologist, in his respondents' acceptance of what he referred to as 'the ultimate values and norms of the Catholic Church' 5. Indeed, by omitting from his terms of reference every baptised Catholic in the area who has severed all connections with the Catholic Church, he was able to concentrate on common values and norms 'inherent in the Parish system' at the expense of the ideology of Catholicism as such. Apart, therefore, from certain concepts based on the terms 'Mass' and 'Priest' which indicate that it really was a Catholic parish which he was studying, there is very little in his account which would help to distinguish his group of people from any other territorially organised body, religious or secular. Durkheim's conception of the sacred — 'things set apart and forbidden' — which he regarded as the very essence of the distinction between religious and other social — 'profane' — phenomena, plays no part in such a framework of analysis, and as a result Ward made no attempt to consider the extent to which the relationship between priests.

and people was influenced by the very special nature of Catholic dogma, Catholic eschatology and Catholic social ethics. The contrast between this type of enquiry and the attitude of mind displayed by Fraser, the social anthropologists and the social historians when concerned with religious beliefs and religious ritual should be quite plain. For the latter the central issue is the human predicament of mortality and how human beings cope with the uncertainty of existence, including the translation of cosmic principles into moral inspirations. They have little concern for the minutae of organisation. This does not mean that Ward’s study is valueless. It does provide an interesting study of role performance as seen in the context of the formal structure of the parish system of the Catholic Church on the one hand, and as interpreted in terms of the ‘ideal of a parish unit’ derived from interviews with parishioners on the other. Indeed, his analysis of participation is directly comparable with those usually carried out under the rubric of ‘community studies’ and with those made of participation in trade unions, political parties, and in industry generally; and in this sense it may be said that Priests and People is as much a contribution to the sociology of organisation as it is to the sociology of religion. In this sense also it is perhaps illustrative of another facet of contemporary British sociology, namely that the traditional division of the subject into various ‘specialisms’ such as industrial sociology, the sociology of education and the sociology of religion are becoming more obviously matters of administrative convenience than matters of sociological content. Perhaps the actual divisions of the subject which are just emerging might be better described as the sociology of social persistence and social change, the sociology of organisations, and the sociology of ideology.

Another contemporary example, looked at from the point of view of the sociology of religion, offers ample confirmation of this claim. In 1954 Brennan and his colleagues published a study of South West Wales which was concerned with the changes in the general pattern of ‘associational life’, that is with changes in the extent of interest shown by the inhabitants of that area in trade unionism, religion, politics, social and recreational clubs, and organisations catering for hobbies. But its concern with religion was not confined to documenting the extent of the decline in the church and chapel membership. It set out to explain the decline ‘in terms of the nature of the churches’ constitutions, the social composition of their leadership or the taking over of some of their functions by organised political groups, especially the Labour Party’ 6. What the authors show is that over time leadership of religious organisations in South-Wales has become shared between the middle and the working classes, and that in consequence class conflicts over political issues which otherwise might have disturbed religious unity have been avoided in their organisations by the simple expedient of avoiding involvement in such issues. Superficially, at any rate, it would appear from this study that Wales also rejected the Dutch solution of this problem — verzuilning — at the expense of a loss of mass membership. The rank-and-file members of religious bodies have turned away from them towards the purely secular Labour Party. Thus, Brennan and his colleagues account for the decline in religious adherence not in terms of a decline in

belief in the Christian apocalyptic, in Christian eschatology, in Christian dogma, and in religious ideology generally — although this may also have occurred. They explain it in terms of the failure of organised religion in this country to come to grips with the social realities of the lives of its membership. Participation in religious organisations, that is to say, is seen as one type only of participation in group life for the realization of certain values, and the function of religion in this respect may, apparently, be performed equally well by a political party.

At this point this study of social change in South-West Wales may be said to provide data which closely approximates those which are relevant for the explanation of contemporary religious behaviour in non religious terms. A secular society, Norman Birnbaum has asserted, 'ist eine Gesellschaft, in der private und öffentliche Entscheidungen ohne Berücksichtigung obernatürlicher Imperative oder Sanktionen getroffen werden'. But this is not all, in a secular society even religious decisions, apparently deriving from supernatural convictions are 'Reaktionen auf Impulse, die von sichtbaren sozialen Prozessen ausgehen' 7. Insofar as this is true, and insofar as England, like Wales, has tended increasingly since the turn of the century to make private and public decisions without reference to Christian dogma, it would also help to account for the current lack of interest shown by sociologists in religious phenomena. They have other, and more important issues, to concern themselves with. As the functions performed by religious associations become transferred to other social institutions, the focus of attention becomes directed away from religious to secular ideology, and from the church to other social institutions.

The one exception of this supports, nevertheless, Birnbaum's contention. Purely religious organisations might be studied by sociologists but not as phenomena in themselves so much as for the information they provide and the extent to which they exemplify the assertion that they are the products of observable social processes. The recently published study by Bryan Wilson of the religious ideologies, the social ethics and the social composition of three minority groups, the Elim Foursquare Gospel Church, Christian Science, and the Christadelphians, falls clearly into this category. He concludes that such bodies serve as 'deviant' reference groups 'in which the individual may seek status and prestige and in terms of whose standards he may measure his own talents and accomplishments in more favourable terms than are generally available in the wider society' 8. Christian apocalyptic, Christian eschatology and Christian dogma may thus be said still to have a function but not in its official form. Only by modifying the official doctrine into a new system of belief is a sect able to maintain an identity, and it is able to do this only because its adherents are in effect deviant individuals in the social structure. The sociology of religion in this kind of study, that is to say, is indistinguishable from the sociology of deviation generally, and Wilson's study might easily have been comprised of the Anarcho-Syndicalists, the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the

Revolutionary Communist Party — three deviant political groups in this country — for he makes little systematic attempt to analyse the 'teachings' of these three sects in terms of the Paretonian scheme of residues and derivations or in terms of some other satisfactory sociological method of studying ideology.

This does not mean that *Sects and Society*, any more than *Priests and People*, is not sociology. What is does mean is that the kind of sociological analysis it employs, largely a deviative of the Weberian exegesis of the routinisation of charisma, demonstrates once again the radical departure of contemporary English sociology of religion from the tradition of its founders. In many respects, of course, this is an excellent thing. All sociologists are conscious of Whitehead's aphorism on the danger of hesitating to forget the past, which stands at the head of Merton's *Social Theory and Social Structure*. But there is equally something to be said for the opposite point of view in the present instance. Might it not be that a greater awareness of the achievements of the *Golden Bough* would revive amongst English sociologists an interest in those divergent, yet complementary belief systems, science, magic and religion which are still important today? The general trend may well be from the older divisions of the subject to new specialisms in sociology, in which the church is being cared for along with the other organisations of our secular society, but it is also important that its doctrine should be studied along with the other belief systems of our time.

BOEKBESPREKINGEN


Duncan Luce, de Amerikaanse wiskundige-socioloog-psycholoog heeft in de laatstgenoemde kwaliteit vooral bekendheid gekregen door zijn boek *Individual Choice Behavior* waarin hij een belangwekkende poging doet, het gedrag van de kiezende mens weer te geven met behulp van een mathematisch model. Onwillekeurig werkt dit bepaalde verwachtingen ten aanzien van de inhoud van het hier te bespreken werk; verwachtingen overigens, die in het geheel niet uitkomen. *Developments in Mathematical Psychology* is een verzameling van drie studies, van de hand van drie verschillende schrijvers, over drie zeer uiteenlopende onderwerpen. Als gemeenschappelijk kenmerk hebben zij, afgezien van de wiskundige inslag, vooral, dat meer een overzicht van een bepaald deelgebied, dan een eigen nieuwe bijdrage tot een onderdeel van de psychologie wordt gegeven. Alle drie studies bevatten daarom ook een uitvoerig literatuuroverzicht, waaruit wel blijkt, dat in Amerika de wiskundige benaderingswijze in de psychologie niet meer uitsluitend een hobby van enkele uitzonderlijke lieden is.

De eerste studie, van de hand van Luce, behandelt op een heldere wijze de informatietheorie, zoals deze zich ongeveer tot het einde van 1957 had ontwikkeld. Een relatief bescheiden kennis van hogere wiskunde is voldoende om deze goede uiteenzetting over een onderwerp, dat ook in ons land meer en meer de aandacht trekt, te kunnen volgen. Als tweede geeft R. R. Bush een kort overzicht van de wiskundige theorie van het leerproces. Deze theorie is nog niet zeer ver ontwikkeld, maar er zijn enkele interessante pogingen gedaan, om enige specifieke leerverschijnselen in termen van waarschijnlijkheidstheorie te formuleren. Het laatste gedeelte van het boek, dat ruim een-derde van de totale omvang inneemt, bestaat uit een uiteensetting van J. C. R. Licklider over 'Quasi-linear operator models in the study of manual tracking'. Het onderwerp van studie, het