

## A RESPONSE TO ANDREW GREELEY

My response to Andrew Greeley's paper will be more complementary and constructive than reactive. First, I agree generally with his substantive point that "the same sort of scholarly discipline is required to determine what the present condition is as is required for reflection upon it." Moreover, I share his conviction that modernization is better understood in terms of "some new skills, perspectives, and experiences, as well as a much longer life expectancy and greater social and geographical mobility" than in terms of some new, radically altered, type of human species, so-called alienated or "secular" or unrooted modern man. It is clear, as the theologian Wilfred Cantwell Smith has shown in his comparative religious studies, that whatever modernization means, it involves a mixture of both continuity and change, a mix and blend of the traditional and the modern.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, I was almost immediately provoked by Greeley's title, "Sociology and Theology: Some Methodological Questions," to turn my attention to different questions than his.

The remote background to my questions is the long and intricate debates in Catholic theological circles in the first half of this century on the relation between philosophy and theology and whether there was such a thing as a specifically Christian philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Probably no one position in those debates became definitive. Nevertheless, the discussions helped Catholic theologians to give precision to the distinction and autonomy of the two disciplines as well as to their mode of unification. The two were seen to be closely interrelated and capable of interpenetration with each other. Finally and most importantly, these debates bore witness to a perennial Catholic assertion that truth, however diverse in its human statements, is, ultimately, one in and through God, the creative source of all being and knowledge. In Maritain's now classic phrase, one must distinguish so as to avoid either reductionism or imperial pretensions of hierarchical domination of one form of knowledge over another. One distinguishes in order to recognize the pluralism of ways of knowing and their rightful autonomy. But, one distinguishes *pour unir*, that is in order eventually to correlate and unify what has been distinguished by seeing

<sup>1</sup>W. C. Smith, "Traditional Religions and Modern Culture," in *Religious Diversity*, ed. by Willard G. Oxtoby (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), pp. 59-76.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. E. Gilson, *Christianity and Philosophy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939); *Le Philosophe et la Théologie* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1960); J. Maritain, *Distinguer pour Unir* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1932).

it from the horizon of some holistic or integrative perspective, thus avoiding some two-truth doctrine or Max Weber's metasociological vision of an ultimately irreconcilable pluralistic universe. These debates about the relation of theology to philosophy, begun in the era of Neo-Thomist scholasticism, have continued in new forms in recent years both in the areas of theological ethics and foundational theology as it relates to a much larger philosophic universe than Thomism.<sup>3</sup>

In the post-Vatican II era, the context of these debates has dramatically altered. First, the range of interdisciplinary work between theology and the human sciences has expanded, in intention at least, to include sociology, psychology, economics and cultural anthropology. The reliance on history has greatly increased as Catholic theology eschews, in principle if not always in fact, the older ahistorical orthodoxy. In this new context, the classic paradigm of theology as the undisputed queen of the sciences has lost its power. The dialogue between theology and the other sciences is no longer a one-way street. As Bernard Lonergan states it in his *Method in Theology*, the older notion of "input" or auxiliary disciplines in theology has been exploded to yield a new framework of collaborative creativity. This is because "a theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix." The older theology related to a classicist and normative notion of culture which was seen as given and relatively unchanging. But, "when culture is conceived empirically, theology is known to be an ongoing process." Thus, Lonergan argues for a contemporary method which would conceive its tasks "in the context of modern science, modern scholarship, modern philosophy, of historicity, collective practicality and co-responsibility."<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, theology's new openness to cultural anthropology, especially comparative linguistics, and its recent preoccupation with phenomenological studies of the character, meaning and uses of symbols has dispelled, in some quarters, an earlier optimism about talking about some universal, transcendental, transcultural language, whether ontological or philosophical or symbolic. The truth which lies beyond all symbol systems as their ground is only imperfectly refracted in any finite symbolic language. Each has its uses and limits as disclosure models.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. D. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury, 1975); and J. Gustafson, *Can Ethics be Christian?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

<sup>4</sup>B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. xi.

While it is a truism nowadays to urge collaboration between sociology and theology, the method of correlation between the two lacks the sophistication of the more developed discussion about relating theology and philosophy. It may be still much too early to begin new reflection about the ways to both distinguish and unite theology and sociology since, as Greeley's paper rightly suggests, there is as yet much too much amateur borrowing by theologians of random "findings" of the social sciences.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the points of contact between the two disciplines are expanding, first, in the close collaboration between pastoral theologians and the social sciences and with group dynamics and, secondly, in the increase in the numbers of theological departments specializing in what has come to be known as Religion and Society at Harvard, Chicago, Boston College and Berkeley.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, theologians are coming to agree that the relative meaning and value of religious symbols "must be derived from their involvement in human existence, not from some transphysical fiat."<sup>7</sup>

Yet, as James Gustafson has suggested in his essay, "The Relationship of Empirical Science to Moral Thought," the correlation, while unavoidable, is not always easy or obvious. He asserts in a subsection of his essay entitled, "Major Problems Involved in the Use of Empirical Sciences," that there are three major questions to ask of any theologian who draws upon sociological data.

1. *What Data and Concepts are Relevant to the Theological Issue Under Discussion?*

Social science studies are executed in their own arena of purpose. Information which is crucial for the theologian might not be crucial for the social scientist's purpose and vice versa. Hence, when a theologian uses social scientific data and concepts, he or she is engaged, in a profound sense, in a translation exercise. As Gustafson puts it, "Great care must be taken in acknowledging the limitations and difficulties of this translation process, for it might not only distort the data used, but also require a reformulation of... questions in such a way that crucial aspects from the theologian's point of view are ignored."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Yet, cf. for a more careful use of social science by theologians, G. Baum, *Religion and Alienation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975); G. Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic* (New York: Macmillan, 1968); R. Gill, *The Social Context of Theology* (London: Mowbrays, 1975).

<sup>6</sup>For a sophisticated use of social science by a pastoral theologian, cf. J. Shea, "Doing Ministerial Theology: A Skills Approach," a paper read at the CTSA-Concilium meeting, "Toward Vatican III," Notre Dame, May 30-June 1, 1977.

<sup>7</sup>R. N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 205.

<sup>8</sup>J. M. Gustafson, *Theology and Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974), pp. 226-7.

2. *What Interpretation of a Field Should be Accepted? And on what Grounds?*

Sociology, of course, is not a monolithic discipline. Theoretical positions cover the gamut from behaviorism to structural-functional analysis to symbolic interaction to critical neo-Marxist theory. Gustafson's point, which I take it is the same as Greeley's, is that if a theologian accepts an interpretation on its "scientific adequacy, he or she has the burden of making the case for the choice on scientific grounds."<sup>9</sup> If theologians are incapable of defending a choice of one social science position over another on social scientific grounds, i.e., in terms of sociological theoretical models and method, they should have the humility to admit that their claimed use of empirical data or sociological concepts is merely illuminative because these show some affinity with their own philosophical or theological point of view which controls any use they make of social science. This purely illuminative use of the social sciences, of course, is not the creative collaboration referred to by Lonergan.

3. *How Do Theologians Deal with the Value Biases of the Studies they Use?*

There has been a great deal of muddle-headed thinking in the last decade and a half, by some sociologists and theologians who espouse the new "critical" sociology, about the ways in which the social sciences are and are not value-free.<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, we are much more sensitive than we were in the 1950's about the extent to which "empirical" sociology, especially as it gets translated into policy studies, can become an ideology, either masking a vested interest in the status quo or, at least, unconsciously supportive of it, or degenerate, as it did for "the best and the brightest," into the opposite of a healthy empiricism open to correction by new data.

Again, a new sensitivity to the ways symbols function has taught us to see social symbols as both reflective of underlying structural realities and transformative. Instead of a one-way causal model between structure and symbol, sociologists have increasingly adopted a cybernetic model.<sup>11</sup> In so doing, they have appro-

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>"Critical Sociology" is associated with the works of members of the Frankfurt School: Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas. In the Anglo-Saxon world the case for critical sociology is made by A. W. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York: Avon Books, 1970); and J. O'Neil, *Making Sense Together: An Introduction to Wild Sociology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

<sup>11</sup>For one statement of the cybernetic model in social science, cf. K. W. Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government* (New York: The Free Press, 1963).

priated Emile Durkheim's central insight that every society contains a sacred normative dimension which stands in tension—in judgment, if you like—on the actual, empirically given, social structuring of roles, rules and relations. No society is fully understood by simply looking to the actual behaviors of its members at a given point of time. Sociology, then, is capable of being critical as well as reflective of empirical reality—and on its own terms. It can never, however, stray very far from the empirically given, if for no other reason than to exercise its criticism responsibly, i.e., in terms of the concrete possibilities and limitations on action to change the empirically given states of a society at any particular moment of its history.

Few among the younger sociologists accept *in toto* Max Weber's classic treatment of value-neutrality in sociology with its absolute division between knowledge and commitment.<sup>12</sup> More than Weber, they are willing to honor *cognitive* claims which flow from commitment. Reason, even empirical reason, is seen, in some sense, as in the service of interests, passions, commitments and values. No perspective is *totally* value-free. I will return to this point later because I feel that some of the analysis of "critical" sociology, while valid as a critique of the sterile myth of the Enlightenment's so-called "neutral observer," is, itself, often doctrinaire and ideological as well as muddle-headed. Gustafson's point, however, is that theologians need to deal, explicitly, with the value-biases to be found in social science studies and their, most often implicit, models of the human person, society and the universe. Perhaps no one more than Andrew Greeley has shown us how various symbolic universes—what he calls "templates, a set of pictures and images for responding to concrete social situations and problems"—contain different ethical valuations and understandings of the nature of the human person and society.<sup>13</sup> Often, these implicit models, as Greeley argues persuasively in his remarks about the myth of modernization, become reigning paradigms in the social sciences, despite abundant evidence which refutes them.

The more proximate background to my questions is a text of my colleague, Robert N. Bellah, which asserts, in ways many, if not most, sociologists would deny, that "the absolute separation

<sup>12</sup>Cf. M. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," and "Science as a Vocation," in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 77-156.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. A. M. Greeley, *The American Catholic: A Social Portrait* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 268.

of social science and theology is impossible. Every theology implies a sociology (and a psychology and so on) and every sociology implies a theology. Or at least any definite theological position limits the variety of sociological positions compatible with it and vice versa. To say they are separate enterprises is not to deny that there is any relation between them, as some have done, or to argue that they operate at levels so different that there is no necessity to integrate them. On the contrary, I would argue that theology and social science are parts of a single intellectual universe. To refuse to relate them is to admit intellectual bankruptcy; it is to admit the inability to confront the totality of human experience.<sup>14</sup>

As Bellah's remarks make clear, the correlation between theology and sociology is no simple matter. As a way of explicating the meaning of Bellah's remarks, I propose five theses which I will first enunciate and, then, expand. The five theses are:

1. As a human science, theology has no method of its own.
2. To achieve its stated objectives, theology needs to be correlated with sociology.
3. Sociology is more than an auxiliary discipline to theology.
4. Neither theology nor sociology can escape the tension between fact and value.
5. The dialogue between sociology and theology needs to be a two-way street.

*Thesis #1: Theology has no Method of Its Own*

Theology differs from the other human sciences not because it rests upon a faith for, as thinkers from Plato to Durkheim to Polanyi have convincingly argued, all knowledge does.<sup>15</sup> Theology's faith commitment, however, is explicit, not tacit, and is directed toward the transcendent God as the revealer of new horizons and human possibilities as these are disclosed in specific human events, texts or interpretations which are considered normative for the self-understanding of human existence. The faith that grounds theology, then, is specifically different from the faith which grounds the other human sciences both because it is explicit and because it is consciously normative as a response to the revealing God.

But, as *human science*, theology has no method of its own. It relies upon literary analysis, textual criticism, logic, ethics and philosophy, history and the social sciences to provide it with a

<sup>14</sup>Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, pp. 206-7.

<sup>15</sup>M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. xiv.

method to go beyond its faith, which, after all, is not the same as theology, to become an understanding. Theology depends upon the methods of the human sciences to uncover the meaning, meaningfulness and truth-value of its normative symbols. Because it has no method of its own, theology is to be judged by the same methodological criteria as the human science, e.g., history or philosophy or sociology, whose method it borrows.

To assert that theology has, properly speaking, no method of its own is not necessarily a pejorative remark. This is both theology's glory and its danger. Because it is ranged in a widespread dialogue with many human sciences, theology is a rich arena for interdisciplinary conversation and integration. In principle, because of its claims of preoccupation with ultimacy and its push toward integrative knowledge, theology has no rival as a locus for interdisciplinary dialogue, although in fact it often remains very narrow in its focus. And, yet, I know of no places in American academia which so mirror the ideal of the university as an *agora* for conversation among the many specialties of knowledge as do our best divinity schools and departments of religion.

On the other hand, because of its great breadth, theology runs the risk, as Greeley points out, of unmethodical borrowing of content from other branches of knowledge without serious confrontation with the discipline on its own terms. Theology has been much more successful on this point in its uses of history, philosophy and literary criticism than in its uses of sociology. In part this has been because so few theologians—one thinks of James Luther Adams, Max Stackhouse, David Little and Stephen Tipton as exceptions—have done serious and sustained homework in the social sciences. I repeat, since theology has no human method of its own, it is to be judged by the same methodological criteria as the human science whose method it borrows to enable it to move from faith to understanding.

*Thesis #2: To Achieve Its Stated Objective, Theology Needs to be Correlated with Sociology*

If I can assume that there is widespread agreement among theologians with David Tracy's assertion that theology involves a critical correlation between "the Christian fact" and "common human experience," I would argue that sociological skills are necessary to both poles of that correlation.<sup>16</sup> Tracy contends that

<sup>16</sup>Cf. D. Tracy, "The Task of Fundamental Theology," in *Journal of Religion* 54 (1974), 13-35.

the method of discovering "the Christian fact," i.e., the normative revealed symbols of Christian self-understanding, is hermeneutics. As members of the Society for Biblical Literature are well aware, in recent years biblical scholarship has focused on the sociology of the Old and New Testament. Analysis of the social structures of ancient Judaism—class stratification, tensions between political and religious roles, the shift from an agrarian, semi-nomadic rural egalitarian society in premonarchical Israel to a more differentiated and cosmopolitan society in the period after the exile—is a necessary *Sitz im Leben* for understanding shifts in religious symbolization from a basically egalitarian liberation ethic in the book of Deuteronomy to the more bureaucratic and compromising ethic in the Wisdom literature.<sup>17</sup> Similar historical work on the sociology of various New Testament communities, e.g., Antioch, has shed new light on the biblical task of hermeneutics.

No less an effort is called for in systematic and historical theology, especially as theologians come more and more to realize that almost all of theology is, in some sense, what John C. Bennett has called, "strategic theology."<sup>18</sup> It answers to pressing needs and claims of very particular times and places. A sociological analysis of those times and places is absolutely essential as a tool for hermeneutics in unpacking the context and meaning of these reactive dogmatic statements in theology. The very effort to trace the development of dogma over time, demands close collaboration with the perspective of the sociology of knowledge. Whatever the finite range of possible meanings of ideas, embedded in their original structural givenness as symbols, they become fixed in their meaning in history only through their interaction with groups. This is especially true if you hold, as I do, with Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch that ideas do not live a life entirely or primarily on their own. Ideas have been as much influenced by the groups they impact as vice versa. They become world-historical shaping forces by their impact upon or elective affinity with ascendant carrier groups and their transmutation and exfoliation through contact with pre-given societal structures, groups and cultures. To do an historical hermeneutic of dogma in a serious way theology needs to be correlated with sociology and institutional history. This is especially true as theology becomes aware of its own historicity and understands its task as an ongoing process. Surely, the history and

<sup>17</sup>I am indebted to my Berkeley colleague, Norman Gottwald, for insights into the social context of Old Testament material.

<sup>18</sup>J. C. Bennett, *The Radical Imperative* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 127.



social interaction of groups—as Troeltsch and James Luther Adams have argued—are essential to understanding the history of theology.<sup>19</sup> If there is one thing the sociology of religion teaches us it is that religious experience is almost impossible without some form of group support. Indeed, there is growing evidence that the value of such group support and a vivid sense of belonging to religious groups as primary communities is more important even than religious symbols of identity as the motivation for people to engage in religious behavior.<sup>20</sup>

Greeley has sufficiently stated the case in his paper for the need for sociology if theology wants to understand contemporary human experience. I feel no need to expand on his points. I would simply add that in terms of Tracy's paradigm for theology, I am much less sanguine than Tracy seems to be that one can discover some universal, transcultural and transcendental language which will disclose "common human experience." I would also share sociology's healthy skepticism about the explanatory power of theoretical models since no one model should be taken as a fully adequate picture of reality. Rather, in the social sciences, several models are juxtaposed. Each model is believed to be more or less adequate as an exemplar of reality for definite research purposes. None alone can serve as the exclusive net to catch and filter the data of the "real" world.

In this view of reality, as Robert Bellah argues,

[we] introduce a note of skepticism about all talk of the "real" world. Reality is never as real as we think. Since for human beings reality is never simply "out there" but always involves an "in here" and some way in which the two are related, it is almost certain that anything "out there" will have many meanings. Even a natural scientist selects those aspects of the external world for study that have an inner meaning to him, that reflects some often hidden inner conflict. But this is true of all of us. We must develop multiple schemas of interpretation with respect not only to others but ourselves. We must learn to keep the channels of communication open between the various levels of consciousness. We must realize with Alfred Schutz that there are "multiple realities" and that human growth requires the ability to move

<sup>19</sup>Cf. E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols., trans. by Olive Wyon (New York: Harper and Row, 1960); and J. L. Adams, *Being Human Religiously* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976).

<sup>20</sup>For the importance for samples of the population of belonging over belief, cf. A. M. Greeley, *The Denominational Society* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1972); G. Lenski, *The Religious Factor* (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1961); Y. Glock, B. B. Ringer and E. R. Babbie, *To Comfort and to Challenge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

easily between them and will be blocked by setting up one as a despot to tyrannize over the others.<sup>21</sup>

*Thesis #3: Sociology is More than an Auxiliary Discipline to Theology*

It should by now be clear that I hold that sociology is as essential and intrinsic to method in theology as is philosophy. Nevertheless, philosophy has a certain special relation to theology different from that of history or the social sciences. They are both ultimate or universal sciences. Like all forms of knowledge, sociology is, to some extent, a social construction of reality. It brings to the dialogue with theology more than just facts or data. It brings, besides these, a worldview, a special imagination, an implicit social ontology which varies in accord with the theoretical position chosen, and its own understandings of human nature and destiny. It brings a special approach to human knowing.

Indeed, much of current theology has already been deeply, if unconsciously, influenced by prevailing sociological concepts. The new fashion of model-thinking in theology is clearly one case in point. Contemporary theology has moved to a more hypothetical and tentative juxtaposition of several models and symbolic schemes to replace its earlier substantive ontologies with universal claims to validity. Moreover, the new interest in religious symbolism as the special and powerful carrier of religious values and shaper of religious experience demands that theology remain in close contact with empirical sociology. Theology has become less arid and conceptual as it turns to symbol as the discloser of transcendence. It has recently seen that narrative form and symbolic ritual in the life cycle of individuals and groups is the lifeblood of any lived religious experience.

And, yet, as Durkheim argued, any society is, itself, a vast network of collective symbols.<sup>22</sup> How these symbols function as either deadening ideology or transformative disclosure of new possibilities in the life of individuals and groups is not determined by speculative reconstructions or fantasies. It is preeminently an empirical question. Again, perhaps no one in the American church has done more than Andrew Greeley to uncover the actual role of religious symbols in family socialization, life-cycle shifts, political

<sup>21</sup> Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, p. 254.

<sup>22</sup> E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 264.

life and society. We simply cannot correlate the Christian fact with common or contemporary human experience without good data about who or who does not belong to what religious groups, at which points in their lives, and why.

Nevertheless, the further task of correlation with sociology as a world-view, as a model of human understanding, and as a conceptual scheme for understanding human society and history remains to be done. For, as Bellah asserts, not every sociological position is compatible with theology and vice versa. I take it that B. F. Skinner's view of the nature of human persons leaves little room for meaningful talk about God. Some sociologists such as George Homans are consistent in espousing the logical implication of their view of human persons as reductively interest-maximizing animals. Homans, at least, concedes that on such a view the universe bears no final meaning.

In other instances, notably that of Peter Berger, a sociological position is incompatible with certain theological stands but not with others. As I have written elsewhere:

Despite his brilliant attempt in *A Rumor of Angels* to provide a new point of contact between Christian faith and human experience by turning to an anthropological starting point for theology which might provide at least "signals of transcendence" in human experience, Berger disallows a similar point of contact with his sociology which remains a closed system. As he put it, "In any empirical frame of reference, transcendence must appear as a projection of man. Therefore, if transcendence is to be spoken of as transcendence, the empirical frame of reference must be left behind. It cannot be otherwise." This is a strangely narrow use of the term, empirical. Similarly, Berger is unable to conceive of a metaphysics fundamentally based on human experience. "Needless to say, this transition from empirical analysis to metaphysics is in itself an act of faith."

Berger seems, then, incapable of surpassing the two-truth presuppositions of neo-Kantianism. . . . Although Berger has always claimed that his sociology presupposes no theology and his theology no sociology, there is a hidden but crucial theological presence which lurks behind all his writing and, indeed, informs this very position—the Lutheran *theologia Crucis*. . . . However difficult the task of confronting the totality of human experience and however tenuous the claims must be to have succeeded, some much more universalistic or ontological symbolic possibilities than those postulated by Berger's personal or social constructions of reality would have to be invoked if we are to reach the kind of truth for societies and not just individuals which touches all edges.<sup>23</sup>

My substantive point is that the correlation between theology and sociology must be attempted with the same seriousness and

<sup>23</sup>J. A. Coleman, S.J., "The Political Ethics of Peter Berger," *Encounter* 38, 1 (Winter 1977), 32-3.

sustained interest that characterized earlier and ongoing discussions about theology and philosophy. The correlation must engage sociology as a theoretical construction for understanding reality as much as sociology as a purveyor of facts for, in some senses but not all, the social sciences are not value-free.

*Thesis #4: Neither Theology nor Sociology can Escape the Tension Between Fact and Value*

To the extent that theologians follow David Tracy's suggestion of correlating the Christian fact with human experience, they open Christian symbols to the test of empirical fact. They need to do this to validate their truth-claims that Christian symbols are illuminative of general human experience and not just the product of an idiosyncratic group history and cohesiveness. On their own account, theologians' commitment to Christian values depends on the ways in which these prove their meaning from their involvement in human existence. Hence, they cannot facilely dismiss sociological data as unimportant to the very claims of universality they make for theological symbols.

On the other hand, sociology is also caught in the tension between fact and value. I have found some remarks of Bernard Lonergan in his *Method in Theology* helpful for sorting out this tension in the social sciences. As you know, Lonergan postulates, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, that there are eight functional specializations in theology. I want to look at his first four functional specializations: research, interpretation, history and dialectic. I make no brief for Lonergan's unusual use of language since in some sense all four are branches of history or what the Germans call *Geisteswissenschaften*, i.e., sciences which relate to human culture and demand subjective interpretation and evaluation. Also, what Lonergan calls dialectic I prefer to call evaluation. I think it would be wrong to conceive of these four functional specializations as either absolutely discreet or necessarily consequential in their appearance in time. In some sense, the four interact and contaminate each other at all stages of their functioning. They are essentially four analytically distinct movements related to method in the historical and human sciences of which both sociology and theology are branches.

Attention to these first four of Lonergan's functional specializations can clarify the ways in which sociology is or is not empirical, is or is not value-free. By research, Lonergan means an opera-

tion which makes available the data relevant to the question under investigation. In theology this might be collecting and cataloguing manuscripts and preparing critical editions of texts. In sociology it might involve demographic data about the social location and economic mobility of statistically tested samples of a population. While it is true that definite interests or values of researchers prompt them to collect certain data and not others, research intends value-neutrality. However imperfect the methods of research, which must be constantly revised under critical scrutiny, credible research methods intend to discover "facts." They build in crucial methodological protections against personal and group bias or projection so as to uncover the "real" as it is, not as we fancy it or desire it to be. Even though the removal of personal and group bias in research may never be absolutely perfect, research as a functional specialty is biased toward empiricism. To the extent that it is not, in either theology or sociology, research is unfaithful to its stated purpose. To speak of research as necessarily and intrinsically value-laden is simply muddle-headed and wrong.

But, the human sciences are interested in much more than raw data. They seek to understand what research makes available. This moment is what Lonergan calls interpretation or hermeneutic. It is not unlike what Max Weber refers to when he talks about passing over to the situation of actors, individual or collective, to determine and understand their definition of the situation for action. Once again, however, the intention is discovery of a world which is other than the self's, of "fact," defined as the real subjective understandings of others rather than the self's projection of its own interests, values or world-view. It is harder to avoid value contamination in this second functional specialization than in the first since it introduces a more subjective element and because researchers must be pretty clear about their own biases, often unthematized, and ready to be shaken by the discovery of alternate life-worlds which are not their own. Nevertheless, in principle and heuristic intent, researchers can continuously refine methods of interpretation such as survey research, interview techniques, content analysis and field-work participation so that subjective or group bias is minimized and reduced, asymptotically, to zero. Here, too, the functional specialization of interpretation, in both sociology and theology, must be biased toward empiricism. To speak of hermeneutics—literary, historical or sociological—as, in principle, necessarily and intrinsically value-laden is to misunderstand the very purpose of this functional specialization.

Some sociologists are content with stopping their work with these first two functional specializations, with careful phenomenological descriptions of plural life-worlds in interaction. Lonergan rightly asserts, however, that the mind cannot rest with determining what people mean by their behavior. His third functional specialization which he calls history tries to grasp "what is going forward in particular places and times."<sup>24</sup> It is not enough for determining what is going forward in history to pass over, in Weber's terms, to the situations of actors and assess their definition of the situation for action. For, as Lonergan states it, "history is concerned with determining what in most cases contemporaries do not know."<sup>25</sup> For events result "not only from what people intend but also from their oversights, mistakes, failures to act."<sup>26</sup>

Situations of action are usually too "thick" to forecast with any surety what is going forward in history. Moreover, as current and prospective history, sociology is not all that good as a future forecasting science since humans maintain a margin of freedom and the law of "unintended consequences" holds good. Sociology, in fact, is more a predictive than a forecasting science. By that I mean that its hypotheses, chosen in advance of testing by data, are tested against data which, when collected, represent already passed events. Although it can test through probability statistics the chances by which current data confirm or disconfirm its hypotheses, sociology cannot be sure of the extent to which future data will look the same. No one can forecast, in advance, the statistical probabilities of an as yet untested hypothesis. Hence, sociology is not really a forecasting science.

Sociologists do history, in Lonergan's sense, when they engage in social criticism or policy-analysis. They do this rightly for they have special knowledge of the structural limits and possibilities of future societal outcomes. They do this almost necessarily because, like others, they want to know what is going forward—what sociologists call trends—in particular groups at particular places and times. But when they do this, the degree to which their own personal and group values enter into their interpretative schemes may be fairly high. When they do what Lonergan calls history, neither theologians nor sociologists are all that value-free.

The fourth specialty which Lonergan calls dialectic I would prefer to call evaluation. I understand him to claim that evaluation

<sup>24</sup>Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 178.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

is intrinsic to the historical sciences. For, we want to grasp not only what is going forward in history but to evaluate achievements and discern good and evil. We want to pass over to alien worlds not just with sterile curiosity but with the risk of encounter. Perhaps this world of others will lay a claim on me as true. At this point, the researcher is as much passionate participant in his knowing as detached observer. But evaluation is not a luxury. It is intrinsic to the historical sciences. To some extent, unless this risk of encounter enters into both hermeneutic and history, researchers will have missed salient points about "the facts" they have tried to discover. For the claims of those who inhabit life-worlds other than our own is much more than that these symbolic universes are interesting or different variants of the human potential or that they are their own. At some crucial point, the claim is that they are true. Participants see them as vehicles of meaning and transcendence. To let that claim encounter us, to risk conversion to a life-world which is not our own is the ultimate test of our passing-over to others' definitions of situations for action. Not to do that is both to some extent to misunderstand the other and to refuse fully to be human.

Sociology is most clearly involved in evaluation when it engages in policy studies. In policy studies we attempt not only to understand what is going forward in history but to further some particular plan of action for the future. We are engaged in the crucial process of social choice. Sociology becomes part of policy studies legitimately because it has its unique perspective and data to bring to evaluation. It can do so without apologies since sociologists, no less than others, must be committed and passionate if they wish to be truly human. But when sociologists set out to improve reality or solve social problems they are decidedly not value-free!

*Thesis #5: The Dialogue Between Sociology and Theology is a Two-Way Street*

It should be clear, by now, that I am making claims for sociology as more than an auxiliary discipline for theology. Besides data, sociology has its own legitimate world-view, imagination, models of knowing and ways of doing interpretation, history and evaluation. If theology is serious about its task of correlation, it needs to confront these no less than sociology's data just as it

<sup>27</sup>Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>28</sup>Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, p. 257.

confronts philosophy or history at this level and not just at the level of the facts they bring.

On the other hand, I would argue that sociology, also, has much to learn from theology, for the dialogue is a two-way street. I will simply indicate three reasons why sociology can learn from theology.

1. The great sociological founding fathers, Alexis de Tocqueville, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, all assumed that a viable society rests upon some consensus which is not rational. Societies are grounded on socially legitimated myths of a sacred normative dimension. For these three, as for those who follow their lead, the sociological study of religion is not merely peripheral to the sociological enterprise as if it were a minor and obscure specialization subdiscipline. Put bluntly, religion provides both the foundation and cement of societies. But, at some point, functional understandings of the way religions provide normative identities and group solidarity raise substantive questions about the root meaning and value of a transcendent dimension in societies. It may be, in this sense, that Durkheim was correct in his assertion that our societies are a locus for religious experience and transcendence.<sup>27</sup> In any event, at this point the concerns of sociology and theology meet.

2. I would argue that theologians have been, by and large, better than sociologists in addressing key questions about the relation of fact to value, their mutual dependence and autonomy. They are much more explicit than sociologists in sorting out the various claims of value and in knowing the risks involved in doing history and evaluating. At this level, I think sociology can learn a great deal from theologians concerning ideology critique, authentic encounter with truth as truth rather than "interesting or curious" variation, and the basis for making value judgments about what is going forward in history.

3. Since the late 1960's there has been an internal crisis in much of Western sociology. The crisis has involved the growing assault on the Enlightenment myth of the Stoic detached observer status of the social sciences. With all of its muddle-headedness, this assault by "critical" sociology is espousing an older, almost classical, view where reason is seen as, ultimately, in the service of commitment. It is the view of Plato's ecstatic reason or Aquinas' reason in consort with rightly-ordered loves or Horkheimer and Adorno's committed reason. The sterile detachment of the neutral observer, when not rejected as disguised ideological commitment



to the status-quo, is seen as an intellectual bankruptcy or moral impotence. As Robert Bellah has put it, "the radical split between knowledge and commitment that exists in our cultures and in our universities is not ultimately tenable. Differentiation has gone about as far as it can go. It is time for a new integration."<sup>28</sup>

Theology, especially Catholic theology with its tradition of both distinguishing and uniting reason and commitment, has much to teach sociology at this point to save it both from the muddle-headed replacement of reason by passion in much of the critical sociology and the concomitant impotency of a detached reason which knows no passions of some of the sociological establishment. If I can end by summarizing what I would look for from a two-way dialogue between sociology and theology, I would expect from theology that it would help sociology to put some madness in its method and from sociology that it would help theology to put some method in its madness!

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