The Potential Contribution of the Social Sciences to Theological Dialogue---Part Two

OLIVER READ WHITLEY

V

The Concept of Self: A Crucial Point for Potential Dialogue

SO often it is not possible to get the behavioral scientists and theologians together to talk about why they do not agree on various points. Thus, in discussing the contributions of the social sciences to theological dialogue one is likely to have to settle for some of the rare instances in which a social scientist who is aware of what the theologians say allows the theological perspective to have a bearing upon his work as a social scientist, or alternatively, for the theologian who is thoroughly familiar with what the social scientists are saying about the questions in which he is interested, and who reacts in terms of his theological orientation. Earlier, we discussed an example of the first situation, that of William Kolb. An example of the second situation is surely the work of Reinhold Niebuhr. In some respects, he has been carrying on a lover's quarrel with the social scientists and psychologists for many years, certainly since the publication of **Moral Man and Immoral Society** in 1932. His most insistent pursuance of the debate with the social scientists concerning the doctrine of man was perhaps in **The Self and the Dramas of History.**[1] While he concludes that the "free and responsible self is either denied or obscured by the prevailing theories of the psychological and social sciences of our day," [2] his discussion of the self "in constant dialogue with its neighbors" is in its own way a statement of some variations on the theme of man-in-community. Niebuhr argues for the "fact-status" of such realities as the "self's freedom, the self-corruption of that freedom in self- concern, or the self's 'historical' character," but he is equally cognizant of the self's dependence upon the other(s).[3] Quite a few years ago, I made some notes on Robert L. Calhoun's review of Niebuhr's **The Nature and Destiny of Man.** I have been unable to find the original reference, but in any event Calhoun said of volume I of this opus, "On its historical side this book cannot be taken seriously. As a treatise on empirical theology it is very thrilling. The real ground of the author's doctrine is not what he has read but what has happened to him as a struggling self." There are times when I think that Niebuhr gets more out of, or reads more into, what the social scientists say than they would be willing to admit is there. At such times, he is not to be taken seriously. But the fact remains that what he has to tell us about the doctrine of man, particularly when it is understood to be the product of "what has happened to him as a struggling self," often amounts to relevant challenge to some of the pre-suppositions of the social scientists. While Niebuhr insists upon the "internality" of "self's dialogue with itself," his statements about this internal dialogue indicate his understanding that the self's dialogue cannot be completely divorced from its external points of reference. "The dialogue within the self," he writes, "proceeds on many levels. Sometimes it is a dialogue between the self as engaged in its various responsibilities

[1] New York: Scribner's, 1955.

OLIVER READ WHITLEY is Professor of Sociology of Religion, The Iliff School of Theology. The first section of this paper appeared in the Winter, 1964 issue of this journal.

[2] *Ibid.*, 129.

[3] *Ibid.*, 128, 4-5.

and affections and the self which observes these engagements. Sometimes the dialogue is between the self in the grip of its immediate necessities and biological urges, and the self as an organization of long-range purposes and ends. Sometimes the dialogue is between the self in the context of one set of loyalties and the self in the grip of contrasting claims and responsibilities." [4]

Niebuhr's existential presentation of the dimensions of selfhood does seem to find a responsive chord in the work of at least some of the behavioral scientists. The reasons why this may be so are made clear by Gordon Allport, in some comments about the concept of the self in contemporary psychology. "Since the time of Wundt, the central objection of psychology to **self,** and also to **soul,** has been that the concept seems question-begging. . . . (F)or two generations psychologists have tried every conceivable way of accounting for the integration, organization, and striving of the human person without having recourse to the postulate of a self. In very recent years (this was written in 1955) the tide has turned. . . .(M)any psychologists have commenced to embrace what two decades ago would have been considered a heresy. They have re-introduced self and ego unashamedly and. . . . have employed ancillary concepts such as self-image, self-actualization, self-affirmation, phenomenal ego, ego-involvement, ego-striving, and many other hyphenated elaborations which to experimental positivism still have a slight flavor of scientific obscenity." [5] As another possible focus for meaningful dialogue between behavioral scientists and theologians about man, I would suggest that we might pay special attention to the phrase "the integration, organization, and striving of the human person." If Allport is correct in suggesting that the endeavor to account for this (or these) phenomenon(a) is the principal reason for the increased willingness of psychologists to employ the concept of the self, it may be important, in terms of potential dialogue, to stress the fact that Christian theologians have never really given up the use of this concept.

VI
Christian Faith and the Carnival of Masks

The most recent example of a sociologist who permits theological views to influence how he carries out his task is Peter Berger. He is perhaps most well-known (or should I say notorious?) for his somewhat caustic and certainly provocative discussion of "the American religious establishment," in **The Noise of Solemn Assemblies.** A book written at the same time and published by the same publisher is perhaps not so well known since it was aimed at a less "popular" audience. This is his **The Precarious Vision,** in which Berger engages in a highly creative attempt (a value judgment which I make quite openly, having already said as much in a review of the book in the **American Sociological Review**) to draw together strands of current sociological work in role theory, reference group theory, and the sociology of knowledge. The result is "the precarious vision," which he speaks of initially as "a certain perspective on society . . . characteristic of the social-scientific enterprise . . . which transforms a world which we are taught to take for granted into one that is very questionable indeed." [6] Berger thinks that it is no accident that religious people are more likely to accept society as it is than are those who have freed themselves of religion. In terms of its social function, "religion appears over and over again as that which validates the carnival of masks," as that which gives "the illusion of absoluteness to one particular coloration of the social

[4] *Ibid.,* 7.

[5] *Becoming,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 36-37.

[6] P. Berger, *The Precarious Vision,* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 9.

stage, thus reassuring and ratifying the individual illusions of the actor." And at this point, it can be said that religion is an indecency.[7] The only posible way out of the world made plain when one has grasped the precarious vision is "a confrontation of our perception of society with the figure of Jesus Christ," which casts its disturbing light "into the corners where one escapes the sacred drums," a light which "calls us to an exodus, not only out of the Egypt of social mythology but also out of the Zion of religious security."[8]

As Berger himself suggests, what he calls the precarious vision has a number of important intellectual ancestors, such as William James,[9] Charles H. Cooley,[10] and George H. Mead.[11] While they do not say the same things, and they certainly would not accept some of Berger's conclusions, certain contemporary social scientists do speak in much the same language as Berger, and it is clear that Berger is aware of their work. Among these we would need to include Talcott Parsons,[12] Anselm Strauss,[13] and Erving Goffman.[14] All of these writers have been interested in one way or another in role theory. They have all made contributions to what is now referred to as the **dramaturgical** approach to the study of human behavior, of which Berger's development of the precarious vision is one example.

Berger believes that it is significant that both the word "role" and the word "person" are theatrical in origin. "(T)he picture invoked here suggests that **all** of man's life is encompassed by this stage. It is on this stage that man becomes an individual in the first place —by learning to play parts, then by integrating these parts into a consistent over-all part which defines his place in the **dramatis personae** . . . . As long as man is alive he cannot escape the stage. He cannot even think of himself apart from the stage, because his image of himself depends upon the images others hold of him . . . . As our parts, and our selves, depend upon others in the rapidly changing situations of the social drama, our existence in society is not only contingent but infinitely precarious.[15] To some, this may suggest a rigid kind of determinism. But to Berger it indicates, not **determinism** as the most important impression left by contemporary work in the social sciences, but **fictitiousness.** We are presented with man the clown, not the slave. "The result of a serious immersion in the social sciences is that this fictitious universe is breached, if only to the extent of a little finger stuck through a colossal zeppelin."[16] We may be puppets, but we can turn around and see the key sticking out of our backs. And here begins man's declaration of independence!

What students of human behavior and society need most of all is a sense of humor. The precarious vision is "sociology under the aspect of laughter," a kind of comic revelation. One specific item in this revelation (whether this is general or special revelation I leave it to the learned theologians to decide) is this. Society **is** a stage, but the stage is made of cardboard paper. One may even suggest that the successful swindler, because he understands this revelation, might be a better sociologist than the sociologists. After all, unlike the sociologists, the swindler is not screened off from reality by his acceptance of the propaganda

[7] *Ibid.*, 21.
[8] *Ibid.*, 22.
[9] Cf. *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Holt, 1893).
[10] Cf. *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribner's, 1902).
[11] Cf. *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).
[12] Cf. *The Social System* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1951).
[13] Cf. *Mirrors and Masks* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1959).
[14] Cf. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).
[15] P. Berger, *The Precarious Vision*, 53.
[16] *Ibid.*, 65-66.

of the cops. The comic revelation illumines our understanding at many points. "As soon as we get beyond the strictly technological aspects of society, there are few of its aspects that cannot be sharply illuminated in this comic perspective of fictitiousness . . . . (E)verywhere one will find actors carefully masked and costumed to put over some magnificent fakery on the rest of the cast." [17] This is nowhere more true than it is in the world of religion, since it is often "religion" which supplies the **imprimatur** for the libretto of the comic opera which is society.

Men take the first step toward the freedom of man as man when they become aware of three things: all of life is a stage, the stage is made of cardboard paper, and religion as the integrator of societies and personalities is a delusion, a form of what Sartre called "bad faith." The awareness of these three things is, however, simply the prelude to an act of affirmation. The affirmation involved is concerned with two questions: since society is a structure of fictions, what is Christian existence in society? and what is the relationship of Christian faith and religion? As those of you who have been keeping up with your theological and ethical one-upmanship will be aware, the asking of these two questions is a preface to some remarks on themes by Karl Barth,[18] Dietrich Bonhoeffer,[19] and Simone Weil.[20] "Christian faith," writes Berger, "means to believe the proclamation of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Its point of origin and its only lasting point of reference is in the person of Jesus Christ . . . . Christian faith is the affirmation that God has decisively entered into our destiny, has broken into history and begun within it the redemption of man . . . . Christian faith affirms that this divine invasion has a name, place, and date." [21] This revelation of God in Jesus Christ is something **very different from** religion. It is, in fact, the basis for a quite devastating anti-religious critique. The Christian faith is not a "spiritual concern," nor is it a form of meeting man's "religious needs." Religion is really a form, not of faith, but of the lack of faith. Religion validates and sanctions social roles, but the Christian faith sees the bad faith and self-righteousness of the social circus.

In the light of the Christian faith, men are stripped of their alibis and disguises. When a man knows that he is justified by grace in the "real" world, as an authentic human being (and not simply the sum-total of his masks) he may then be enabled to face himself and thus to do without the narcotics of ideology. Most of us tend to take society for granted, to identify readily with the social roles "assigned" to us, and to develop ideologies to take care of any lingering anxieties we may have about these roles. This state of affairs is disturbed by both the Christian faith and the social sciences. Berger is convinced that the attempt to get a deep understanding of the Christian faith and the endeavor to develop a broad perspective on society are related. "Both theologians and sociologists," he says, "spend much time erecting methodological fences which keep out the uninitiated (and, incidentally, imprison the initiates)." [22]

VII

An "Unintentional" Point of Dialogue

The possibility of dialogue between theologians and social scientists about man is also increased by the attention

[17] *Ibid.*, 80.

[18] Cf. K. Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik* (Zollikon-Zuerich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1945), 1/2, 304ff.

[19] Cf. D. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1955).

[20] Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1951).

[21] P. Berger, *The Precarious Vision*, 164-65.

[22] *Ibid.*, 208.

which some behavioral scientists pay to matters which suggest points of contact with theology. The ideas involved are not usually discussed in theological language, but they are of such nature that they can readily furnish starting points for meaningful conversation. An example of this possibility is the work of Gardner Murphy. In the kind of a book which a man writes in order to sum up the philosophical implications of the research which has occupied him for many years, Murphy develops the notion of "the third human nature," a notion which certainly interests the thelogians when they are not preoccupied with the doctrine of sin, and when they are instead seeking the sources of creativity in man. Murphy suggests that the processes of evolution have produced a first human nature, "that human nature produced by the gradual development of a raw distinctive humanness differing from the nature of all other creatures,"[23] consisting of the general biochemical and nervous organization of human beings, together with those processes that lead to the presence of some individuality in each person. The second human nature is signified by the emergence of culture, which, while it certainly involves the development of new ways of feeling and of "seeing" the world, also means human nature "cabined, cribbed, confined," and is one source of the inertia so often observed in societies and individuals. But there is, in spite of this, a third human nature, "a still small voice, a tiny dissident voice, which may at times erode and even ultimately destroy vast rigid blocks of cultural tradition." Thus, the thing which must be understood about man is "the fulfillment of the three human natures in their interrelationships . . . within the individual personality — the raw stuff of his being, the acquired cravings . . . the deep protest against both as he seeks new meanings that transcend these first definitions."[24] I am aware, of course, that there are still theologians who might be inclined to write off this sort of talk as exhibiting a variety of what is invidiously referred to as "decadent nineteenth century liberalism" which Reinhold Niebuhr has vigorously attacked for so many years. And certainly no one wants to be identified with that! The critique of the so-called "Liberal" doctrine of man was in my view richly deserved, for as usually presented this doctrine was too individualistic, (H. Richard Niebuhr was at one time willing to say of the social gospel, so often associated with the liberal doctrine of man, that it was neither social nor gospel), too idealistic, and to rationalistic. To this judgment I am bound to add, however, that if contemporary theologians want to engage in conversation with the social scientists about man, they must be prepared to give the doctrine of creation equal time with the doctrine of sin. This means that they must be at least willing to entertain the possibility that the critics of the liberal interpretation of human history may have said a **true** word, but not the **complete** word, and emphatically not the **last** word. As Charles Frankel has so relevantly pointed out, Maritain criticizes "liberalism" because of its experimental view of morals; Toynbee convicts it of the sin of pride; Reinhold Niebuhr objects to its apparent faith in human perfectibility; and Karl Mannheim takes a dim view of its commitment to the objectivity of human reason. Yet, "the disasters of recent history are not enough to explain the present decline of the liberal outlook. It is not these disasters alone, but the **imagination** of disaster, and the attempt to convert that imagination from a historical circumstance into a metaphysical necessity."[25] If the thologians are to

[23]G. Murphy, *Human Potentialities* (New York: Basic Books, 1958), 15.

[24]*Ibid.*, 17-18, 21.

[25]C. Frankel, *The Case for Modern Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), 5, 41.

talk to the social scientists about man, in any way which suggests genuine dialogue, they will need to be less eager than some of them seem to be to convert historical (or other) circumstances into metaphysical necessities. On their side, of course, the social scientists will need to be less prone to express disdain for (and discomfort in the presence of) the claim that empirically oriented descriptions and theoretical analysis of human behavior have metaphysical and ontological significance.

VII

The Social Self: A Dialogue Between Social Psychology and Existential Theology

Both the prospects and problems of dialogue between the social sciences and theology concerning the doctrine of man are beautifully illustrated in Paul Pfuetze's account of the convergence he finds in the thought of George Herbert Mead and Martin Buber at the point of the theory of "the social self." "The themes, concerns, and contentions of this study," Pfuetze says, "are increasingly germane to the problems, both theoretical and practical, in which contemporary ethics, education, sociology, psychology, psychotherapy, and theology are interested. The central motif in the work of Mead and Buber, and the emerging heuristic doctrine concerning the inter-personal nature of human existence, provide us with a remarkably valuable instrument of analysis in understanding the human situation.[26] Pfuetze shows clearly how the ideas of these two germinal thinkers zero in on matters with which all the disciplines he mentions of necessity must concern themselves. Pfuetze has here acted as the mediator of a dialogue which, while it never actually took place because one party to it died in 1931, is filled with insights that are relevant to the concerns of this paper. The importance of this dialogue is underlined when it is realized that the two thinkers which Pfuetze finds converging upon a common point of reference start from points so far apart (in terms of methodology and orientation) that it would seem impossible for them ever to agree about anything.

The common point of reference upon which Mead and Buber converge is, as already suggested, "the social self." This point of reference, Pfuetze argues, "can be developed and elaborated empirically, independent of disparate methodologies and metaphysical viewpoints," and it is quite possibly "a new standpoint and a unifying set of concepts for philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and sociologists."[27] Most of the matters discussed in this paper are referred to in one way or another in the course of showing how Mead, the naturalistic social psychologist, and Buber, the Jewish mystic and existentialist, speaking respectively the languages of pragmatic and empirical science and faith and revelation, manage to develop, at crucial points, a common universe of discourse. "The predominant motif in their thinking and writing is the conviction that all life is in essence a complex of relationships; and that on the human level it is only within a social matrix, within the field of the social act, that the 'self' arises. It is in meeting, in interaction between persons, in communication with others, variously conceived, that the free,responsible independent **human** person is achieved."[28]

To do justice to all the relevant aspects of the Mead-Buber dialogue within the limits of this paper is obviously impossible. A few of the salient points can, however, be lifted up for special attention. Mead and Buber have provided an empirical foundation for the view that man must be understood as essentially a "socius." They agree that man as **individual** becomes man as **person** only in relation with others. The

[26] P. Pfuetze, *Self, Society, Existence* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), originally published 1954 as *The Social Self.*

[27] *Ibid.*, 20.

[28] *Ibid.*, 229.

fundamental fact about man is **man-with-man,** man in self-other and dialogic relationship, and neither self nor society, as such, is the primordial reality. What constitutes selfhood is speech or dialogue. Man literally **talks** himself into selfhood. Both Mead and Buber emphasize the crucial importance of dialogue in the emergence of selfhood. For Mead, this dialogue is, on the one hand, between self and others, and on the other hand, between the "I" (the organism's response to the attitudes of others as this appears in one's experience) and the "me", (the organized set of attitudes which I assume and which I introject into my own private self) which make up the self. The "me" limits the "I", which makes society's necessary social control upon behavior possible, while the "I" at times asserts itself, which allows for the possibility of novelty and change. For Buber, the dialogue which the self has is primarily of two kinds, based upon the kind of relationship which man has with his environment; there are personal responses to that environment, which lead to "I-Thou" relationships, and manipulative adjustive responses, which establish "I-It" relationships. Real selfhood is based upon the establishment of "I-Thou" relationships, but such relationships are always in danger of being transformed into "I-It" relationships.

The idea of the **social self,** as developed in the thought of Mead and Buber, provides a basis for a doctrine of man which is sounder than either the older individualistic view or the contemporary dogmas of collectivism. While Mead always disavowed an interest in metaphysics, one might argue that his implied metaphysical position is clearly naturalistic and positivistic. At this point, Pfuetze suggests that Mead is not quite successful in accounting for the **capacity** of the human animal to develop language, to entertain values, and to take the role of the other. Mead did not recognize the possible theological implications of his idea of the Generalized Other (the product of all the many roles assumed successively and simultaneously by the individual). "Whereas Mead himself never conceived of the Generalized Other as more than the social universality of the human community, some of his friends among the religious humanists urged him to expand his concept to include the idea of God as a functional concept."[29] Had Mead followed this lead, he might have expressed in socio-scientific language a notion in some respects similar to what Buber speaks of as The Eternal Thou, the one Thou which can never become an It. By saying this we do not mean that the Generalized Other and the Eternal Thou are terms referring to the same reality. Rather what is meant is that Buber and the Mead might have been able to engage in fruitful dialogue at the point where these concepts intersect. Buber, in his own way, is vague about metaphysics, for he prefers to concentrate upon developing an existential description of the life of dialogue with man and God from which he believes selfhood comes. Even so, Pfuetze goes on to suggest that some of the reductionisms he finds in Mead's account of the social self may be corrected in the direction of Buber's idea that man is addressed not only by the others which make up his human and natural world, but by God himself.

IX
Some Further Areas of Possible Dialogue

Since this paper is now already of some considerable length, it now appears that it will be necessary to bring it to a close. A number of items which belong in the context of potential or actual dialogue between the social sciences and theology can be mentioned only briefly. One of these items is certainly the potential dialogue between the theological ethics and sociology about the burning questions of race re-

[29] *Ibid.,* 87.

lations. Earlier, reference was made to the fact that when two sociologists made a study of the behavior of the ministers in Little Rock at the time of the integration of Central High School there, they had several encounters with Colbert Cartwright, then minister of Pulaski Heights Christian Church. In correspondence on this situation, Cartwright indicated that he had been able to suggest several methodological points to these sociologists, bearing upon some inadequate understandings they had about the role of the minister and the nature of the church. It would be a difficult thing to prove, but I think that it is entirely possible that some of the conversations te sociologists had with this informed minister may have led directly to certain redefinitions of the problem they were attempting to study. There seems to me to be some evidence of this possibility in the sociologists' report on their research.[30] The role of the minister, and the nature of the church, understood theologically, **may**, then, contribute something to the work of the behavioral sciences in the crucial area of methodology. Some further encouragement is given to the acceptance of this possibility by at least two papers which appeared in the Festschrift volume for H. Richard Niebuhr, "Christian Ethics and Social Policy," by James Gustafson, and "A Theological Analysis of Race Relations," by Waldo Beach.[31]

Some new life was put into the old debate about the adequacy of Durkheim's effort to discover in society the empirical referent for the concept of God by the publication of Guy E. Swanson's **The Birth of the Gods.**[32] In a study which is remarkable both for the rigorousness of its scientific intention and the thoroughness with which theoretical implications are followed out, Swanson has attempted to examine Durkheim's basic idea by breaking it down into propositions of a lower order of abstraction and then using the basic data of some five hundred fifty-six societies grouped in fifty regions throughout the world to test these propositions. "We have known for a long time," Swanson indicates, "that ideas about the supernatural were intimately related to the maintenance of motivation in the individual and integration in society, to the ultimate evaluations which men make of their experiences and the most fundamental bonds which unite they to each other. . . . (But) the object that provoked all the panoply of religion and magic remained elusive. We have had, from the standpoint of natural science, only Durkheim's pregnant suggestion of an answer. The main objective of this research has been so to modify and elaborate Durkheim's approach, as to make it susceptible to empirical verification."[33] The flavor of Swanson's theoretical discussion is perhaps best indicated by reference to the way in which he deals with the implications of his own theory for alternative theories of the origins of various beliefs. Concerning the theory that beliefs in supernature are fantasies which arise to compensate men for deprivations, he has this to say. "Our findings suggest additional reasons for doubting the accuracy of this view. . . . (T)he extent to which . . . deities are active in human affairs is a function of the presence of organized groups which embody certain purposes. There is no relation between the degree of help to be expected from these spirits and such a measure of deprivation as lack of food."[34] In the light of Freud's contention that "the gods retain their threefold task: they must exorcise the terrors of nature, they must reconcile one

[30]T. F. Pettigrew and E. Q. Campbell, *Christians in Racial Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1959).
[31]P. Ramsey, *Faith and Ethics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 119-139, 205-24.
[32]Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960.

[33]*Ibid.*, 189-90.
[34]*Ibid.*, 177.

to the cruelty of fate . . ., and they must make amends for the sufferings and privations that the communal life of culture has imposed on man,"[35] a contention which, to say the very least, has made the intellectual life of many theologians exciting, if not precarious, it is of some interest to discover in the work of a contemporary social psychologist the hypothesis (together with supporting evidence) that important religious beliefs cannot be attributed to human deprivation. To be sure, theologians may find an equal amount of difficulty in following out some of the implications of Swanson's study, since it is apparent that he proceeds upon a positivistic basis, and there are sociologists who believe that at the outset Durkheim's presupposition that any belief must in the end turn out to have an empirical referent was in error.[36] Nevertheless, theologians who are not content merely to beg all the important questions will sooner or later have to deal with the kinds of questions raised by studies like that of Swanson.

X
Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to call attention to certain developments in the social sciences which seem to me to indicate that the possibility of a fruitful dialogue between sociologists and theologians does exist. At the same time, it must be admitted that instances of actual dialogue between representatives of these two areas of intellectual concern are difficult to find. My examnation of a considerable quantity of literature both in the behavioral sciences and in theology has not uncovered any very encouraging evidence that the theologians and social scientists are doing a great deal of talking with each other. In many instances, the "dialogue" is not really dialogue, but simply a mutual ignoring of one group by the other. For myself, I would find it extremely difficult to say whether it is the theologians or the social scientists who are responsible for this situation. As pointed out early in the paper, some theologians indicate a kind of willingness in general to engage in dialogue, but it is significant that the dialogue is more likely to be between the theologians and the artists and dramatists than it is to be between theologians and social scientists. At the same time, it must be said that there are theologians who seem to glory in the fact that what they have to say about man is set forth with a sublime indifference to what the behavioral scientists claim to have discovered. This is most often likely to be the case with theologians who have ruled out the possibility of any kind of natural theology. I find it extremely difficult to see any way in which the nether regions of Barthian theology could establish a point of contact with work currently going on in the social sciences.[37] The difficulties are made very clear even within theology itself, for instance in the debate between Barth and Brunner about the so-called "orders of creation." For their part, most social scientists, if they do not hold that theological data, hypotheses, and theories are a hindrance to their work, at least find it possible to carry on their enterprise with no regard whatever for such matters. Theologians and philosophers may be aware that ultimately it is not possible to disavow metaphysics and ontology, but social scientists, in the solution of many of the problems in which they are inter-

[35] *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott (New York: Liveright, 1928), 30. Cf. also the various works of Eric Fromm on this matter.

[36] On this point, see the remarks of Kingsley Davis in his *Human Society* (New York: 1950), Chapter XIX.

[37] Some theologians have suggested to me that the implied understanding of Barth's thought indicated here may be inaccurate, or at least inadequate. This may be so, but it is a fact that the doctrine of man as set forth by theologians influenced by Barth has not been too interested in what social scientists have said about man.

ested, find it relatively easy to ignore the metaphyscal, ontological, and axiological implications of their work. The most likely place at which a meeting-ground between theologians and social scientists might be established is the point at which sociological theory, the sociology of knowledge, and the sociology of religion find themselves working on the same fundamental questions. Whether this might lead to a situation in which the sociologist would be led to ask the question "what is man?" in the manner in which the theologian is likely to ask it may perhaps be most safely included in the category of things which only God knows.