The Potential Contribution of the Social Sciences to Theological Dialogue

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IN this paper, I am concerned with discussion of the contribution which sociology might make to the consideration of issues in contemporary theological discussion. The use of the term "social sciences" in the title, rather than simply the term "sociology" is deliberate. I do not intend to suggest by this that sociology is the queen of the social sciences (and thus can encompass them all in a discussion of this kind) or that I will attempt to include material from each of them. What is meant is simply that for a purpose of this kind I find it difficult to draw sharp and clear lines among several of the fields usually identified with the social sciences. More than this, no constructive purpose would be served by the attempt to introduce technical distinctions among these fields into this discussion. Above all, the social sciences deal with human action and interaction of various kinds. Professor Yinger has pointed out that the "complete analysis of human action requires the study of social, cultural, and personality facts, both as separate systems capable of independent analysis and as mutually influencing parts of a larger system . . . . It is difficult to study a society (an interacting group of human beings) without continuous reference to their culture (the system of norms and usages) by which their interaction is so strongly affected . . . . And it is equally difficult to study a culture without constant attention to the people who are its bearers, the groups through which it is communicated, the societal processes by which it is changed."[1] Yinger was, in this instance, specifically dealing with what he felt had to be the basis for the sociology of religion—namely that the term "sociology" was for that purpose a shorthand term for "sociology-anthropology-social psychology." Similarly, I would hold that sociology does not make its contribution to theological discussion as a field that is sharply differentiated from other social sciences, but as a discipline which is, itself, increasingly entering into conversations with other disciplines commonly identified as social sciences.

I must confess to a slight tendency to cringe when the word "dialogue" is mentioned, since there is a sense in which it has become the okay word of the devotees of a cult. But the word is nevertheless a perfectly good word, descriptive of a very important kind of activity. If the word dialogue suggests that a meaningful kind of conversation is to occur, a conversation which is not simply a series of consecutive monologues, but in which there is real talking and equally real listening on both sides, then the word indicates something which is extremely important and necessary. For myself, I will have to leave the more esoteric connotations of the word dialogue (such as encounter, confrontation, and the like) to my more learned friends who understand such mysteries. I am convinced, however, that the time is coming, and may already be here, when the social scientists and the theologians could profitably engage in a process of dialogue from which both groups can learn something.

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[1] J. M. Yinger, *Religion, Society, and the Individual,* (New York, Macmillan, 1957), 18-19.

I

The Possibilities of Dialogue

The theologians, from their side, seem to express a general attitude of willingness to engage in this process. Roger Hazelton, for example, has expressed the mood of many theologians when he says that theology itself, by its very nature, is a kind of conversation. Theology, he indicates, is not solely "a matter of propositions stated and positions taken." Commenting on the reputation of theologians for contentiousness and pugnacity, he goes on to suggest that "if the theological air is thick with acrimony and arguments **ad hominem**, that may be because theology is not a series of set speeches but a way of thinking through and talking out together what is meant by God, man, sin, salvation, church or Kingdom."[2] There are times, Hazelton says, when Christian theologians need to concern themselves inwardly with their own kind of truth. But there are other times when theology needs to enter into a phase of "exploration and engagement," to have what Robert Frost called "a lover's quarrel with the world."[3] If theology has now entered such a phase of exploration and engagement, and there are signs that it has, then it is surely probable that this process might include an increasing amount of dialogue with social scientists.

There is, one must admit, not very convincing evidence that the social scientists have been overly willing to express a need for the insights which theologians might be able to provide. At the same time, one can point to instances, as I shall later in this paper, where some serious attempt at dialogue between sociologists and theologians might be possible. There is now ample indication that social scientists feel a real need for dialogue among their various disciplines. Insofar as this is true, it is certainly possible that this trend may encourage conversations with people who do not qualify for admission to our fraternity. John Gillin, in editing a volume published in 1954, which dealt with some of the convergences taking place among the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology, pointed out that "if one examines carefully the output of serious modern students of man he will inevitably come to the conclusion that they hold in common a considerable body of verified data and agree on many points of theory."[4] In this book, an attempt was made to discover what these three sciences already hold in common as a matter of explicit theory, and to seek for theoretically as yet unformulated convergences.

In the same context, Mirra Komarovsky suggested that "there is no surer way to make explicit the differences and similarities of the various disciplines than to examine them as they converge upon a common problem. Delusive harmony will be exposed when what hitherto appeared as a common concept is now seen to carry different operational meaning to each specialist. Conversely, apparent differences turn out to be merely differences in terminology."[5] There is not time to discuss the implications of the two statements which have been quoted. Such exploration would take us far afield from our present concerns. I mention these two statements only by way of indicating that some social scientists are beginning to talk as if they are interested in at least some kinds of dialogue. Perhaps if this means only that we can get the experimental psychologists away from their rats and the archaeologically inclined anthropologists away from their potsherds for only a part of the time it

[2] R. Hazelton, *New Accents in Contemporary Theology*, (New York, Harper and Row, 1960), 9-10.
[3] *Ibid.*, 11.
[4] J. Gillin, *For a Science of Social Man*, (New York, Macmillan, 1954), 7.
[5] M. Komarovsky, *Common Frontiers of the Social Sciences*, (New York, Free Press of Glencoe, 1957), 2.

will be a hopeful sign of better things to come.

The most likely place to find dialogue between the social scientists and theologians is, I suppose, in the community of the theological seminary, particularly in a situation where the seminary is a part of a university, or where there is at least a university nearby. I do not know how many seminaries are accurately described in some remarks which were made in the Niebuhr-Williams-Gustafson study of theological education, apropos the matter of dialogue between the social sciences and theology. These remarks do, however, suggest a kind of charter for such a dialogue. "There needs to be in the theological faculty some strong representation of scientific and cultural disciplines to act as a continual check and critic of the theological standpoint, and at the same time to provide for that discussion between theology and the cultural situation which is necessary if the faith is to be communicated to the world."[6] So necessary is this discussion that it could even be said that "a student has not been introduced to the core of theological education until he has entered into this conversation between Christian thought and the many disciplines which are concerned with man and his world."[7]

No attempt will be made in this paper to present an exhaustive coverage of all the innumerable facets of this discussion between theology and the various disciplines which deal with man and his world. The endeavor to be exhaustive would be exhausting. What can be done is to lift up certain illustrations of the dialogue which is already going on here, or which might profitably go on if the parties to it could be persuaded to talk with, rather than at, or past, each other. The illustrations employed will of necessity be selective. They will reflect examples of actual or potential dialogue which have come to my attention in the course of pursuing problems germane to the teaching of sociology of religion in a theological seminary where the data, hypotheses, and ideas of the social sciences and psychology are given every opportunity to be heard.

[6] H. R. Niebuhr, *et al., The Advancement of Theological Education,* (New York, Harper and Row, 1957), 64-65.

[7] *Ibid.,* 87.

II

Models of Man in the Social Sciences

As might be expected, dialogue between theology and the social sciences is most likely to be found in connection with the doctrine of man. An outstanding example of this dialogue is the recent attempt of a sociologist, William Kolb, to challenge what he regards as the "orthodox" doctrine of man employed in sociological work on the basis of explicitly stated Christian theological premises. Professor Kolb has presented various facets of this dialogue in several journal articles, and on at least two occasions he has raised issues of this kind at sessions of the American Sociological Association meetings.[8] He contends that the image of man which provides the basis for most of the work being currently done in sociology and social psychology is the image of "the person determined, within the limits set by a permissive biological inheritance, by society and culture."[9] He argues that in this image a complete determinism is presupposed, in which the view that personality is a dynamic system in its own right is subordinated to a quite explicit societal and cultural determinism. The sociologists who employ this image, he says, tend to minimize the import-

[8] Cf. "Sources of Presuppositions in Urban Value Theory," (Unpublished Paper); "A Social-Psychological Conception of Human Freedom," *Ethics,* LXIII, (1953); "Religion and Values in Sociological Theory," *The Christian Scholar,* XXXIX, (1956); 204-8; "Values, Politics, and Images of Man in American Sociology, "*The Christian Scholar,* XLIV, (1961), 319-331.

[9] W. Kolb, "Images of Man and the Sociology of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* I, (1961-62), 6.

ance to the person of psychological needs other than those which are brought about by the internalization of cultural imperatives.

Kolb is not concerned simply to set forth a kind of Christian anthropology (using this term in the philosophical or theological rather than the scientific sense) which can be put over against the dominant deterministic model of man. He deals with the matter in connection with the methodological issue of the kind of theoretical model which will yield the most fruitful type of hypotheses for empirical testing. In a sense, he contends that the use of the dominant deterministic model actually interferes at some points with the pursuit of the goals of sociology seen as an empirical science. It is highly significant, he feels, that the term "freedom" rarely is to be found in sociological literature. In fact, there is "a direct logical connection between the image of man in orthodox sociological theory and the conception of freedom" as "a subjective feeling of personal well being which results from the objective fact of living in an effectively functioning society."[10]

When freedom is viewed in this way, it is hardly a significant aspect of the person, for what he **is** is contained in the processes and modes of being suggested by the concepts of socialization and role. Also, this understanding of freedom does not allow for the creative deviant who may succeed in transcending the casual matrix in which he is involved. Professor Kolb explicitly states his belief that the use of the dominant deterministic model of man seems to have led to a "massive shift in the sociological profession from a concern with the fundamental problems of the nature of human society . . . to the acceptance at best of a non-critical adjustive approach to human society involving increasing stress on professional expertise rather than public enlightenment, and, at worst, a manipulative approach in which sociological skills are sold without criticism to the highest bidder, so long as the sacred ox of scientific neutrality is not gored."[11] He does not contend that this situation is completely dependent upon the so-called orthodox image of man, but he does insist that we need to inquire whether such an image of man is really the best one to employ in the ordering of sociological data.

Certain central elements of the Judaic-Christian image of man may be used, Kolb suggests, in ordering the data with which sociologists deal. The most important of these is the concept of human freedom (Kolb prefers to say conditioned will) which indicates both human freedom and the limits within which it exists. We do not arrive at a concept of freedom merely by rejecting all the tenets of the socio-scientific view of man; it is necessary only to set aside the determinism which places the human self **totally** within a network of invariant relations. When used as a principle for ordering sociological data, this understanding of freedom consists simply in accepting the presupposition that no act is ever **completely** determined. A second dimension of a Judiac-Christian image of man concerns the universal conditions of man's existence—that he lives his life under the threat of meaninglessness, since he must face suffering and death; that he orients to man in every instance either as one free agent confronting and being concerned about and open to another free agent, or as a free agent seeking to manipulate an object; that because of the threat of meaninglessness man is forced to relate himself to some entity which is capable of overcoming meaninglessness.

A third dimension of the Judaic-Christian model of man deals with the fact that the establishment of an orientation to any entity capable of overcom-

[10] *Ibid.*, 7.

[11] *Ibid.*, 10.

ing meaninglessness, while necessary, is actually an impossible possibility. No religion or system of ultimate values quite succeeds in being fully grounded in the one nonempirical object that can really overcome meaninglessness. The fourth dimension of the Judiac-Christian image of man is one involving an orientation to the reason and finiteness of man. Man is not, in this image of him, so finite that he is completely absorbed in the matrix of cause and effect, but nature, and culture, and man's own emotional processes do limit him. Irrationality obviously exists, but free commitment to values is not simply irrationality although it may go beyond reason. The perversion of reason is seen as a result of self-centeredness.[12]

Kolb believes that the use of the Judaic-Christian image of man in sociology has some important long-range implications. First, a sociology of religion and values using this image of man raises the question of ambiguities and stresses in different modes of social integration based on different religions and value systems. "The idea of a society integrated by agape and oriented toward such a non-empirical entity (as suggested by the Judeo-Christian faith) . . . can be used as an objectively possible but empirically improbable model of social integration from which empirically probable constructed types of integrated and disintegrated societies can be described and accounted for in terms of mode, manner and degree of deviation and resultant consequences."[13] A sociologist who might use a Judaic-Christian model of man would not be particularly surprised to find a religious system transformed into a rationalization of class or political interests, but neither will he be likely to fall prey to the "nothing but" fallacy. Such a sociologist, Kolb says, would follow **The Social Sources of Denominationalism** with **The Kingdom of God in America**, as H. R. Niebuhr did.

[12] *Ibid.*, 12-15.
[13] *Ibid.*, 21.

The use of the Judaic-Christian image of man will also bring into question the frame of reference suggested by the concept of **social system**, for in terms of the image society will be viewed, not simply as a boundary-maintaining system, but as a value-realizing system. Society will become not the central focus but an instrumentality for the achievement of human values. When the Judaic-Christian image is used, such use will direct attention to the question of whether experiences of, and beliefs about, the supra-empirical are valid, and whether some of these experiences and beliefs may be more valid than others. This is, to be sure, not a scientific question, but the scientist cannot simply ignore it. The final result of the use of a Judaic-Christian image of man in sociology will make it possible for this discipline to see man as in some ways, and to some extent, accepting in freedom the risks, liabilities, and responsibilities of his life. It should also make it more difficult to use sociological knowledge for purposes of manipulation.

Needless to say, Kolb's presentation of this point of view has not been greeted with loud cheers by many of his fellow sociologists. To begin with, Talcott Parsons, in a comment on Kolb's paper says, "I should like to question whether such an orthodoxy . . . really exists and . . . whether his alternative, a 'Judiac-Christian commitment' constitutes, from the point of view of the contemporary situation of social science, **the** important alternative, though it may constitute **one** such alternative . . . . It does not seem to me that the term "orthodoxy' . . . is appropriate to describe the very tentative, fluid and partial consensus which has come to exist, particularly within the American sociological profession. Nevertheless, that there has been an important degree of crystallization which has greatly reduced the older diversity of schools, seems to me to be true and important . . . . There is clearly no standard formu-

lation . . . which remotely approaches 'canonical' status, nor is there any clear line between those who do and do not share it."[14] Parsons goes on to suggest that the root of Kolb's difficulty is really the problem of positivism. He argues that Kolb fails to notice that the main features of his objections to radical positivism are shared by the secular humanists, as well as Protestants and Catholics. There is, he indicates, likely to be a generalized nonpositivistic image of man in Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu religions which must be taken into account. "Professor Kolb," Parsons says, "is unduly anxious. The positivistic image of man is not as pervasive or powerful as he seems to think it is."[15]

The dialogue between Kolb and Parsons on issues of this kind has been going on for several years. It has been carried on not only in writings and rejoinders, but verbally. On one occasion, this particular discussion was pursued publicly at a session of the American Sociological Association dealing with sociology in theological education. At the 1960 meeting of the association Kolb read a paper entitled "Basic Assumptions Underlying Sociology of Religion, Sociology of Knowledge, and Science." This presented a view similar to the one which has been reviewed above. The response to this paper, given by Professor Frank Hartung, of Wayne State University, indicates what Kolb must be prepared to expect if he continues this kind of discussion. Said Hartung, "The Judiac-Christian conception of man, while having some components in common with scientific method, is in at least one respect antithetical to science: It creates entities that by definition cannot be subjected to continuing investigation. In another respect it is wholly unnecessary; sociology has already developed a conception of man that is logically and empirically grounded. The conception of man and the sociocultural that is partly explicit and partly implicit in it can adequately work on the problems of determinism, partial freedom, and responsibility . . . . The sociological conception presents man as a rational being who is able to reach a decision on the basis of reasoning. The Judaic-Christian view in this respect resembles the sociological."[16] Resistance to dialogue with the theologians may be expected from those sociologists who are not prepared to recognize the inability of sociology to handle the kinds of data to which Kolb's view points.

While there has not been time to make any kind of a thorough check on the matter before preparing this paper, I am inclined to think that an examination of the leading textbooks used in the teaching of sociology in colleges and universities would tend to support Kolb's contention that there may be a rather thoroughly deterministic model of man employed in much sociological work. At the level of advanced courses in sociological theory the kinds of problems Kolb wants to get into the picture may be dealt with. In introductory courses, sociologists are concerned to present the image of the field as scientific, and there may be more of a tendency to emphasize an image of man which makes him unambiguously the object of empirical study. In another sense, however, Kolb may not be quite so justified in his contention that the deterministic model of man constitutes an impregnable orthodoxy. Examples may be few, but I can cite at least one research paper done by sociologists in which a model that does not fit this orthodoxy was employed. This is the study of Little Rock ministers done by Pettigrew and Campbell.[17] Speaking of their methodology in attempting to discover how these ministers behaved in

[14] *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, I, (1961-62), 22-23.
[15] *Ibid.*, 28.

[16] American Sociological Association, *Abstracts of Papers*, Fifty-fifth Annual Meeting, 1960, 103-4.
[17] "Racial and Moral Crisis: the Role of the Little Rock Ministers," *American Journal of Sociology*, LXIV (1958-59), 509-16.

the conflict that occurred in connection with school integration in Little Rock, these sociologists stated that "in analyzing their behavior, we treat self-expectations as an independent variable. **This is contrary to the usual course, in which the actor is important analytically only because he is caught between contradictory external expectations. The standard model of role conflict treats ego as forced to decide between the incompatible norms of groups that can impose sanctions for non-conformity.** This model . . . skirts the issue of whether ego imposes expectations on itself and punishes deviations . . . . This additional variable—the actor's expectations of himself—is especially meaningful in the analysis."[18] Significantly, these sociologists both depart from a model which Kolb has criticized, and indicate that the departure is somewhat unusual. Perhaps we should add to this the fact that these sociologists had some rather lengthy conversations about their methodology with a person competent to introduce them to important aspects of theological dialogue, namely Colbert Cartwright, minister of Pulaski Heights Christian Church, Little Rock.

Professor Kolb directed his fire at the sociologists and social psychologists. Persons working in these fields do, if we are to judge from what they publish, tend to show somewhat of a reluctance to open themselves to possible insights from the theologians. Some anthropologists, however, seem less preoccupied with theoretical models closely resembling those of the natural scientists. Here, for example, is Loren Eiseley, who speaks of the oft-heard cry "I can't help myself," as the "final exteriorization of man's moral predicament, of his loss of authority over himself." The statement is, he says, "a truth, but in it is also a dreadful, contrived folly."[19] I do not know whether Eiseley has been been influenced in any direct way by theology, but his language is such that we might be justified in concluding that he would at least know what some theologians are talking about. "Man has," he tells us, "become natural, but the nature of his 'naturalness' escapes him. . . . 'Natural' is a magician's word and . . . it should be used sparingly lest there arise from it . . . some monstrous caricature called into being by the indiscreet articulation of worn syllables."[20]

III

Some Emerging New Trends Relevant to the Dialogue

Enough has been said to indicate that there are plenty of social scientists who are perhaps not prepared to learn very much from what they understand the theologians to be able to contribute to the solution of problems in which the social scientists are interested. At the same time, there appear to be instances where the theologians do not seem to be aware of some developments in the social sciences. While I do not wish to push this point too far, I am inclined to think that a recent example of this is the statement made by Bernard Meland. "While the behavioral scientists have steadily modified and enlarged upon their methodology since the time of Darwin, it must be acknowledged that the image of man that guides their research is essentially consistent with that of nineteenth-century evolutionism. That is to say, they have been reluctant to appropriate or to be caught up in the holistic vision of man, which owes its stimulus, in part, to modern physics and the development of field theory and to revisions in biological theory following from this imagery."[21] There is a certain amount of truth in this, but it is by no means the whole truth. I think it is significant, in the light of Meland's statement, that there

[18] *Ibid.*, 509-10.

[19] L. Eiseley, *The Firmament of Time*, (New York, Atheneum, 1960), 143.

[20] *Ibid.*, 114, 180.

[21] B. E. Meland, *The Realities of Faith*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1962), 188.

is no mention in his book of the work of Kurt Lewin, who spent an academic lifetime developing field theory for the social sciences, Meland makes no reference to some significant exceptions to his generalization.

In his discussion of the "new image of man" Meland seems concerned to emphasize two important points. The first of these he calls "the otherness of reality, as distinct from the human equation itself. Man is viewed in a context. Man is not the whole of reality. He participates in its depth of meaning. To be sure, man is a formidable figure in the drama of events that make up this cosmic history; but he is not its creator, its arbiter, or its determiner of destiny .... The decisive factor in modern thinking . . . can be said to be this sense of otherness as a real, defining, even assertive dimension of man's existence—an 'out there' which may not be altered simply by wishful thinking, or evaded by circumventions of human imagination."[22] Concerning this "otherness of reality" which in one way or another most theologians are likely to include in their image of the human situation, the social scientists are probably not in any position to contribute special insights. There are anthropologists who insist that culture is to be thought of as a thing **sui generis,** and if one understands culture in this way it could be viewed as a part of the "otherness of reality." This "culturological interpretation" does, however, reduce man to a tiny and relatively insignificant part of "a vast sociocultural system that embraces innumerable individuals at any one time and extends back into the remote past as well," but it is not necessary to "consider man at all—as a species, race or individual—in an explanation of culture change."[23] For scientific purposes, culture is explainable in terms of culture and man is simply irrelevant. This is not, I am inclined to think, what Meland had in mind in his insistence upon the otherness of reality. The anthropologist quoted was Leslie A. White. His theory of culture has been widely criticized as an extreme form of reductionism.

Meland's second major point has to do with an emphasis upon the "individual-in-community." "The individual in community," Meland says, "is the holistic, the organic, and the emergent way of affirming the demands of relationships which create, nurture, and hold each individual life in existence while, at the same time, acknowledging the needs and merits of individuation. The one points to the social ground of all existence; the other lifts up the unique value along with the limits of every concrete occurrence, including that of individual man."[24] Here I think the social scientists are able to provide some significant insights, and to support the theologian in what he wants to affirm about man. Perhaps because of his belief that the social scientists have not caught up with the holistic image of man that is being developed in other areas of intellectual work, Meland has (if we are to judge by this most recent book, which I am doing here) not made reference to some meaningful convergences between what he wants to affirm theologically about man, and what the social scientists are saying about man from their point of view. This seems curious in view of his explicit statement that "the new metaphysics . . . is the direct route of reaction against an era of individualized mentalism which obscured and even obstructed this deeper social sense of selfhood."[25]

Helen Merrell Lynd has brilliantly described the ways in which contemporary behavioral scientists both hinder and help our understanding of man, in her study entitled **On Shame and the Search for Identity.** In a chapter on the

[22] *Ibid.,* 196-97.

[23] L. White, *The Science of Culture,* (New York, Farrar, Struas, and Cudahy, 1949), 181.

[24] B. Meland, *op. cit.,* 202.

[25] *Ibid., 206.*

contemporary study of personality, she suggests that such study has tended to work from parts to wholes, endeavoring to discover discrete items of behavior, putting them together, and then seeking to find the relations among them. The increased emphasis upon holism, field theory, gestalts, and the like, has not necessarily, she points out, meant any reduction of atomistic ways of thinking. She is critical also of the use in personality study of models which appear to be drawn from nineteenth century Newtonian science and classical economics, and of theories which stress the notion that behavior is primarily the result of attempts at tension-reduction or restoration of equilibrium of the organism. She contends too that reward-punishment theories of personality which are built upon a model of psychological and moral scarcity cannot deal with some of the most profound personal experiences, such as shame, independence of thought, identity, and the like. "Through all the ways of phrasing the phenomena of personality and society," Mrs. Lynd contends, "runs reductionism, the tendency to think that understanding results from reducing complex phenomena to their simplest elements, or to a single basic principle of explanation. Wholes tend to be reduced to parts, qualitative or organizational descriptions to quantitative statements, human strivings to compensations for frustrated primary needs, human development to response to reward punishment, human relations to need-satisfying human objects, human society to its here-and-now, history-free structure and function."[26] She would, then, seem to support Meland's contention that behavioral scientists have been slow to develop the holistic image which has been emerging in such fields as physics and biology.

Professor Lynd goes on, however, to indicate some ways in which new approaches to the study of personality are mitigating the tendencies already described. In recent work more effort is being given to the attempt to discover significant wholes, and the search for items of behavior about which "nothing-but" statements can be made is in some respects being less emphasized. The language of holism, or field theory, is given more attention. The willingness to include the study of process and change, as well as structure, is also becoming more evident. The theory of behavior as compensatory or as tension-reduction mechanism of the organism is being modified in the direction of recognizing that goals of human beings can be purposes in which the whole self is involved, and not simply specific objects of tension release. There is even some tendency to recognize that the language of tension release, of "coping behavior" is itself not simply a description of actual behavior, but almost a world-view. Thus, the way is being opened to the kind of model of personality in terms of which dialogue between the theologians and behavioral scientists might be possible. "If we accept the idea that human beings are concerned with something more than the satisfaction of specific needs and the return to a previously established equilibrium, then we can begin to give serious study to what this something more is."[27] Theories of motivation based completely upon a psychology of reward and punishment are certainly being questioned. The recent developments which have been discussed are made quite clear in the work of Kurt Lewin,[28] Henry A. Murray,[29] and Gordon Allport.[30] I shall not attempt to discuss

[26] H. M. Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity,* (New York, Science Editions, 1961; first published 1958), 114.

[27] *Ibid.,* 143.

[28] K. Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science,* Ed. D. Cartwright, (New York, Harper and Row, 1957).

[29] H. A. Murray, "Toward a Classification of Interaction," in Parson, T., and Shils, E., *Toward a General Theory of Action,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1951), 434-64.

[30] G. Allport, *Becoming,* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1955).

their contributions in detail. Suffice it to say that these contributions are convincing demonstrations of trends in the study of human behavior which will, I believe, make conversation between theologians and behavioral scientists possible. If I were in an optimistic mood I would say that it might make such conversation necessary.

More directly related to the emphasis upon "man-in-community," which Meland and other theologians insist upon, is the progress being made in clearing away obstacles to the understanding of man as capable of having loving relationships with other human beings. In an incisive summary of this matter, Professor Lynd suggests that there have been three major obstacles to such understanding: the Freudian view that other human beings are objects which provide or withhold the satisfaction of ego's needs; emphasis upon hierarchies of status and role, which result in limiting personal relations to the categories of the indulgent, the deprivational, or the indifferent; and the stress upon other persons as "the audience" which gives or withholds approbation. It can be readily seen that if relations of ego and other(s) are viewed exclusively in one or more of these three ways, then the possibility of exploring ways in which persons can see and treat each other as persons will be very slight. Perhaps the behaviorial scientist who has done more than any other to lay the groundwork for a view of personality which transcends these three models of human relationship is Harry Stack Sullivan,[31] although there are others who have made significant contributions to this end.[32] Personality, in Sullivan's view, "is a hypothetical entity which cannot be isolated from interpersonal situations, and interpersonal behavior is all that can be observed as personality. Consequently, it is vacuous . . . to speak of the individual as the object of study because the individual does not and cannot exist apart from his relations with other people . . . . That which is distinctly human is the product of social interactions."[33] This approach, in some respects, is a radical one. Accepting it will have some very important methodological, and I am inclined to add, theological, consequences. For "there may be wide differences in the range of what is conceived as possible according to whether one starts with the assumption of separate individuals and then considers how they may be linked together or starts with the assumption of related persons and then considers how they may develop individuality within the group."[34]

IV

Society and Individual: Separate or Complementary?

An important implication of all this discussion of theories of personality, an implication which I believe is very important when we consider the prospects of dialogue between theologians and social scientists, is that both individual and society (or group) are abstractions. When we reify either the individual or the group, the purposes of scientific understanding are blocked, and the attempt to develop a Christian theological anthropology is likely to be abortive. Of course it is important for some scientific and theological purposes to give primary attention to individual or group, but never with any implication that these can really be separated, except for analytical purposes. This discussion really involves a version of the old (and apparently never ending) argument between the nominalists and the realists, an argument which I must confess has always seemed to me to jus-

[31] H. S. Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry,* (New York, Norton, 1953).

[32] Cf. K. Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time,* (New York, Norton, 1937), and E. Fromm, *The Sane Society,* (New York, Rinehart, 1955).

[33] C. S. Hall, and G. Lindzey, *Theories of Personality,* (New York, J. Wiley, 1957), 134-35.

[34] H. M. Lynd, *op. cit.,* 159.

tify William James' contention that philosophy is a matter of temperament. In terms of the matters under consideration here, I would insist that it is important and necessary to hold that groups are real, that is, they are not simply aggregates of individuals. Yet, for some purposes, it is equally necessary to pay particular attention to the individual, as over against the group.

The question of whether groups are real has elicited wide discussion in sociology and social psychology. Charles K. Warriner[35] has summarized the discussion of the question by pointing out that contemporary research exhibits four major orientations to it. The sociological **nominalists** argue that the group is not a real entity, but simply an assemblage of individuals. The **interactionists** suggest that we must reject the individual-group dichotomy and emphasize the concrete indivisibility of the two. The **neo-nominalists** accept the idea that the term "group" has an objective referent, but they claim that the group is less real than the individuals who make it up. The **modern realists** hold that the group is just as real as the person; both individual and group are abstract, analytical units; and the group is explicable solely in terms of distinctly social processes and factors, and not by reference to individual psychology. While his purpose was to defend the legitimacy and validity of the realist position, Professor Warriner indicates that the view which seems to have the ascendancy is that of the **neo-nominalists**, with the **interactionists** tending to lean in that direction. If one has in mind the possibility of dialogue between theologians and social scientists, it would appear that the **interactionists** are the social scientists most likely to understand what the theologians are concerned to emphasize. This is certainly true theoretically, although I must admit that I have not had opportunity to test out this proposition by actual dialogue with sociologists or social psychologists who take each of these four positions. A Christian anthropology would, I believe, finally come to insist that the dichotomy of individual and group is a false one. This is certainly what the phrase man-in-community suggests.

A recent contribution to this discussion, which I would regard as greatly relevant to any dialogue between theologians and social scientists is that of Edward A. Tiryakian. In his **Sociologism and Existentialism**[36] he attempts to work out a kind of reconciliation of the views of Emile Durkheim and his school with those of the existentialists. I regard this as very important in the present context because so much contemporary theology has so obviously been influenced by existentialism (indeed, one could almost say that contemporary theology could not exist without existentialism). Tiryakian has succeeded in making his book the vehicle for what could be a genuine dialogue between these two radically different approaches to the "predicament" of modern man. Sociologism, he points out, might be defined as "the viewpoint of those sociologists who, making sociology a science completely irreducible to psychology, consider it as necessary and sufficient for the total explanation of social reality."[37] Existentialism cannot be so simply described in a one-sentence definition, for existential thought contains many paradoxes, logical contradictions, and it tends to glory in inconsistencies and to regard systematic order as a kind of crime against the person. It has, however, two broad dimensions which intersect at one point —philosophical thought in general and the world situation, which intersect at the point of the situation of man today.

[35] C. K. Warriner, "Groups Are Real: A Reaffirmation," *American Sociological Review*, XXI, (1956), 549-54.

[36] (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1962).

[37] E. Tiraykian, *Sociologism and Existentialism*, 11.

I shall not attempt to review the origins and development of either sociologism or existentialism, a task which could not be undertaken in the compass of this paper.

The concluding chapter of Tirykian's study suggests some ways in which the perspectives of sociologism and existentialism might profit from a dialogue between them. "A common compassion" Tiryakian says, "animates sociologism and existentialism: the predicament of the individual in modern society, who cut off from his traditional ties, has become deracinated. Where they diverge . . . is in the therapy they propose. For existentialism, the necessary moral reconstruction of the world . . . can only be an individual matter, a matter of inwardness; now that the social order has lost its stability and traditional foundation, it is the individual alone who can shoulder the burden of existence . . . . For sociologism, since the moral crisis of the world is a social one in essence, only some form of collective reorganization may bring about a remedy; sociologism sees the solution in the reintegration of the individual and society, in the development of new social grouping which will offer to the individual a meaning for his existence by giving him the sense of participating in something greater than his own self."[38] In some ways, these views seem hopelessly irreconcilable, but this is not necessarily so. Tiryakian argues that Durkheim's basic concern was actually to study objectively what is a **subjective** reality, namely society, seen as a psychic reality composed of beliefs, values, and ideals. Thus he thinks it might be possible to investigate the extent to which the "existentials of human-beings" are reflected or manifested in social existence. If it is possible to accept Durkheim's notion that a man is what he is only because of participation in society, that the "humanity" of a man is constituted by "the interpenetration of the social in the individual," then the idea that being-in-society is an essential part of the existential structure of being-human can be entertained.

From the standpoint of the sociologists, it must be insisted that existential thought (both philosophical and theological) has not completely succeeded in relating man to his existential situation, primarily because of its tendency to abstract man away from society. Much of existential thought is prone to overlook the fact of socialization, the never ending process in which an individual has his self molded and influenced (if not actually defined) by social contacts. or in which he internalizes societal elements in his personality. What existential thought is genuinely concerned to preserve in its understanding of man is not undermined by admitting such considerations into its approach. The existentialist emphasis upon "becoming," for instance, can be given a valid ground if it is accepted that the being of man has an intrinsic social dimension, for the sociologists see socialization as a dynamic process. The sum of the matter is this. "Without incorporating a genuine social dimension existentialism is threatened with failure in its efforts to liberate integral man from the constraints of traditional philosophy. By abstracting man from society, by treating the individual and society as polar entities, existentialism may have built a magnificent edifice without some essential building blocks . . . . If existential philosophy (and I would here add theology) is to maintain its vitality . . . it must reconsider the existence of man in the light of an anthropological-sociological perspective. It must take a . . . perspective which would view man's social participation not as an epiphenomenon but as an authentic existential mode of being."[39]

The importance of the search for "a genuine social dimension" in our understanding of man has also been un-

[38] *Ibid.*, 162.

[39] *Ibid.*, 168-69.

derlined in a very illuminating way by Robert A. Nisbet. His analysis of "the quest for community" throws a great deal of light on the question of why the existentialists seem to have been so insistent upon their repudiation of society.[40] In modern times, Nisbet points out, the individual has been released from his ties to class, religious group, and kinship group, but the "freedom" thus obtained has meant, not creative release but disenchantment and alienation.[41] The individual has been thrown back upon his own inner desources—a development which the existentialists seem to glory in, indeed to regard as the hope (if there is any) of modern man—but the consequence is that he often then becomes prey to anxiety and guilt.[42] Religiously speaking, it might be argued that the protestant emphasis upon the individual, somewhat at the expense of the community of the church, has finally led not only to the isolation of the individual but even to the break-up of the man-God relationship; certainly it has led to the atomization of personality. It appears to have been forgotten that primary groups such as the family, religious association, and local community are not simply external to men's thoughts and behavior. More than this, they are in essence prior to the individual, and they provide indispensable support for belief and conduct. Put man outside the contexts provided by community, and he becomes, not free and possessed of rights, but insufferably alone and subject to a loss of the courage to be.[43]

The sense of isolation which many men feel today, and the quest for community which for some has become almost a preoccupation, are two different aspects of the same problem. It has gradually become evident that the traditional primary relationships in which men are involved—in family, church, and community—are quite irrelevant to the political and economic spheres of our society, and even meaningless to the moral aspirations which individuals in an organizational society entertain. Men attempt to find in large-scale organizations the values of status and security which they formerly realized in the primary groups.[44] In any society, Nisbet holds, men's loyalties and devotion will gravitate toward the associations and patterns of leadership that appear to have the most significance in the maintenance of life. There is an important tie-in between the symbols which give an individual's life meaning, and the institutional value of the structures which are the source of such symbols. Thus, "our present crisis lies in the fact that whereas the small traditional associations, founded upon kinship, faith, or locality, are still expected to communicate to individuals the principal moral ends and psychological gratifications of society, they have manifestly become detached from positions of functional relevance to the larger economic and political decisions of our society."[45] Nisbet is not here indulging in nostalgia. He is not looking for antiquarian revivals (or restorations?) of groups and values not in line with the requirements of an industrial age. Nor is it the position of a specific group, such as family or church, that is important for the maintenance of social order. The essential point is that there need to be, in any viable and stable society "functionally significant and psychologically meaningful groups and associations lying intermediate to the individual and the larger values and purposes of his society.[46] The problem is not the loss of old contexts but the present failure to create new contexts of association and moral cohesion in terms of which the smaller allegiances of men

[40] R. Nisbet, *Community and Power,* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1962, published originally as *The Quest for Community*).
[41] *Ibid.,* 10.
[42] *Idib.,* 15.
[43] *Ibid.,* 25.
[44] *Ibid.,* 49.
[45] *Ibid.,* 53-54.
[46] *Ibid.,* 70.

will come to have significance, both functional and psychological.[47] When the contemporary situation of man is interpreted in this way, it is possible to see why the existentialists have tended to repudiate the communal and societal dimensions of man's life, and to understand why it is necessary to say that their very repudiation of these dimensions becomes an expression of the plight of man and not the solution to it. While it may not be possible to spell out precisely what the implications of the affirmation are, there appear to be some pretty good grounds, both theological and social-scientific, for affirming the proposition that man must be viewed as man-in-community. If the individual is reified, it is difficult to see how any meaningful version of a Christian or a behavioral-scientific understanding of persons and selves can be developed. Likewise, if group or society is reified, the undeniable empirical reality of individuals who differ from each other in many ways (some of which can be measured with a degree of accuracy), and the uniqueness of self before God upon which many theologians insist, are either denied or explained away. I think it would not be too much to say that many behavioral scientists and most theologians would be able to accept the phrase "man-in-community" as a starting point for what could be a creative dialogue about the doctrine of man.

(To be continued.)

[47] *Ibid.*, 73.