INTRODUCTION

Those who are committed both to Catholicism and to professional sociology need to assess the compatibility of these two commitments. There are three critical issues. 1) Is it necessary or desirable to partition the role commitments? 2) How can a sociological perspective rooted in concepts of relativity and cynicism serve the function of spiritual enlightenment rooted in universal and ultimate meaning? 3) In what sense can the intrinsically precarious vision of sociological analysis be imbued with religious meaning? Deductive Catholic and inductive sociological definitions of reality must influence each other in a cybernetic fashion. While compartmenting must be maintained in performing each role, integration occurs at the level of commitment to a Catholic world view and to the idea that Catholic theology must be involved both in the selection of intellectual concerns and in the interpretation of the ethical import of objective analysis. Sociology influences Catholicism by the enlightenment derived from open inductive methods of research. Catholicism legitimates sociology in that empirical and descriptive analysis of social life is brought to bear on the ultimate questions of human existence. This relation can elevate both forms of commitment.

One important theme of recent Catholic theology is the mission of Catholic individuals to contribute in their daily life to the Christianization of the World. For Catholic sociologists, a critical assessment of the compatibility of these respective commitments is mandatory. How can Catholicism be fostered through the pursuit of sociological knowledge? Conversely how can a commitment to Catholicism contribute to sociology as an intellectual discipline?

INTEGRATION VS COMPARTMENTING

There are two equally extreme ideal-typical options. One can try totally to segregate or integrate the two role commitments. In the latter case, the sociological or intellectual perspective is made to follow logically from certain given suppositions which rest on faith alone. From the viewpoint of such an extreme variant of Catholic sociology, one must submit to demands of divine revelation, as interpreted by the Magisterium. That the spirit of Pope Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors was alive and well until recently was made clear through the warnings and cautionary approach of Pope Pius XII in the 1950 encyclical Humani Generis with its call for all intellectual and scholarly activity to be circumscribed by, and interpreted from Thomism.

The other equally extreme option is to keep as separate as possible these two role commitments. Catholic dogma, in a view represented by such a scholar as Father Joseph Fichter, undermines and impedes the development of a scientific sociology. The sociology of Catholicism here is viewed as concerned solely with the empirical and descriptive analysis of Catholics in the social or temporal world, while Catholicism is concerned with the supra-empirical realm of ultimate values. The strategy is simple. When doing sociology, one's Catholicism must be pushed to the periphery of consciousness. The other side of the argument is that sociological relativism undermines and contaminates Catholic faith and belief. The wisdom of sociology cannot intrude into the process of spiritual fortification without destroying it. Viewed from either side of this option, social science and Catholicism represent autonomous spheres in the sense that each must be forced to occupy a background status while the other is in the foreground of attention and relevance.

We reject the first ideal-typical
FREE INQUIRY in Creative Sociology

position because of its needlessly
deductive method which confuses
timeless and divinely inspired
truth. The Church is a mystery
that must ever be open to discov­
er, through more inductive tech­
niques, of new truths about the
relation of humanity and society
to God. The intellectual honesty
and civility of Father Avery
Dulles' confrontation with theolo­
gical pluralism in Models of the
Church presents a marked aware­
ness that the Church is not only
an incomprehensible mystery, but
that both society and humanity
are also complex and multifacet­
ed. A narrowly deductive ap­
proach is inappropriate in consi­
deration of modern society's re­
 cognition of history and tradition
as dynamic processes. Humans
have created the civil world, and
humans should therefore attempt
to understand the civil world.

To admit to the socially con­
structed nature of reality (Berger
and Luckman) is not necessarily
to deny that the workings of civil
society are intertwined with those
of the sacred, supernatural Cos­
mos. Our opposition to the second
ideal-typical option is not the con­
tradictory position that Catholic
scholars advocating a value-free
sociology of Catholicism are athe­
lists. Rather, the opposition arises
from the empirically verifiable im­
 pact that such a methodological
atheism has on the intellectual
product of those who advocate sev­
ering the link between the emipi­
cal and the metaphysical. The
results of a purely inductive em­
pirical sociology have encouraged
the development of a discipline in
which the important and ultimate
questions of human existence have
systematically been ruled out of
existence. Banishing the supra­
empirical dimension from sociology
assures the triumph of intellectual
triviality.

We reject both the Catholic soci­
ology, and the sociology of Cathol­
icism as historically presented.
Bounds must be imposed on the
extent of the integration of roles
of Catholic and sociologist. A
Catholic sociologist must bracket
considerations of commitment to
Catholicism in routine tasks of
studying empirical social reality
and must bracket the perspective
of scientific rationalism in the
experience of the sacred and the
supernatural.

On the other hand, legitimate
Catholic sociology must recognize
significant linkage between these
commitments. Here, the Catholic
perspective comes strongly into
play both in the decision as to
which issues to investigate and
in the ethical interpretation of
the importance of such issues.
There are the dialectical and the
cybernetic models for conceiving
the nature of this linkage. A dia­
lectical relation would be a mut­
ual and reciprocal influence be­
tween Catholic and sociological
commitments. This model is neither
adequate nor tenable.

The Catholic role is a primary
role for any individual whose
Catholicism is a source of person­
al and social identity. A Catholic
perspective envelops other roles
such as that of sociologist. Cathol­
icism does not represent a pri­
mary role simply because it ought
to have preeminence, but because
preeminence is intrinsic to the
Catholic perspective. We prefer a
cybernetic model which involves a
two-level flow of downward control
and an upward feedback. To say
that Catholicism stands at the com­
mmand post of a cybernetic hier­
archy means that it alone can
provide information to the con­
crete activities of everyday life,
given the concern of Catholicism
with ultimate meaning. Sociology
provides energy to the command
post. By energy we mean actions
which serve to mediate, translate
and actualize the preferences of
the command post. Sociological
work, along with other concrete
forms of mediation serve to make
Catholicism real in everyday
thought and action. Parsons has
articulated this position more form­
ally in his Paradigm of the
Human Condition, where he asserts
the cybernetic superordination of
the religion-based telic system. One's Catholic and sociological commitments are cybernetically related such that Catholicism controls the choice of social research problems, and sociological analysis provides feedback. Finally, Catholicism provides interpretative information on the ethical implications of the sociological analysis.

The basic Catholic principle of subsidiarity as propounded in Pope Pius XI's Quadragesimo Anno illustrates the reciprocal nature of the Catholic-sociologist nexus. The principle of subsidiarity asserts that all social functions shall be performed by the least inclusive social unit. If education can be performed maximally by the family, then the family and not the neighborhood should take charge of education. If, in complex differentiated, bureaucratic societies, or in highly socialized societies, the neighborhood can better handle education than the state, then education should be handled in the neighborhood, and not at a more remote level. Such a Catholic orientation leads the Catholic sociologist to investigate the role of the state in the field of education. Then the feedback begins. On completion of investigation, the sociologist can become a Catholic again, and interpret the objective findings in light of the ethical need for some form of deschooling society, as Illich puts it, and to strengthen local education as a mediating structure, according to the sociologist and theologian, Berger (Illich 1971; Berger 1977).

A second illustration of the cybernetic example involves the philosophical and anthropological understanding of Catholicism that man is neither totally depraved nor capable of a full transformation into perpetual holiness. This orientation views the mass of mankind as neither sinners nor saints and leads to a full debunking analysis of a socialism that promises total redemption from human ills on this earth. The underlying concept of man in the socialist tradition is one of plasticity and malleability. People are shaped by environmental and social structural factors. Eliminate the sinful social structures of capitalism, and man will enter into a continued state of reason and probity. The underlying concept of man by Rudolf Solm in his Outlines of Church History is that people are corrupt, and unable to transcend the propensity for sin and evil. Solm's Lutheran position denies that either humanity or the Church can both be in and of the world, and at the same time be authentically Christian. The Catholic position, as we see it, stands between 1) a total emphasis on salvation as totally this-worldly or other-worldly; or 2) as totally an individual or collective enterprise. As the 1971 Synod of Bishops put it, a concern for justice is a constituent feature of the preaching of the Gospel.

Elemental in the Catholic message is the worship of the utterly merciful, knowing, majestic and transcendent God. This moderate Catholic understanding of humanity guides interest in the empirical analysis of socialism and capitalism. Peter Berger's Pyramids of Sacrifice illustrates the failure of socialism and capitalism to make good on their promises. A Catholic sociologist would interpret this objective analysis into the ethical call for the acceptance of any philosophical/economic system which can demonstrate that it maximizes the health, welfare, and freedom of all people. The Catholic position is set out in its lay tradition by Andrew Greeley in his personal manifesto: The Communal Catholic.

In terms the phenomenological concepts of foreground and background, such a cybernetic conception of a Catholic sociology weaves back and forth between the commitment to Catholicism and the commitment to professional sociology. A deductive Catholicism and an inductive sociology are in continuing conversation, and are compartmented in a 3-stage sequence which is integrated in the cybernetic process. At the
head of the cybernetic hierarchy is a diffuse attachment to Catholicism modified by an openness to influence from the bottom upward in an objective, inductive sociological analysis. Given this cybernetic relation, what is the nature of sociological feedback, and what is the nature of Catholic control? The first is the sociologizing of Catholicism, referring to a Catholicism that is sociologically aware and informed. The second is the Catholicizing of sociology. It refers to a sociological form of analysis which is spiritually aware and informed.

SOCIOLOGIZING CATHOLICISM

The sociological perspective seeks to describe the arbitrary, relative, and even farcical aspects of social life and human existence. Its chief objectives include the demystification, debunking and unmasking of human action and belief. Such a perspective attempts to explain the degree to which meaning systems such as Catholicism, perceived by adherents as absolute, taken-for-granted and universal, are socially, culturally, and historically constructed and grounded. Sociologists point out that no person could function socially without routines and taken-for-granted structures. The individual Catholic is not forever wearing sociological glasses. Yet there is considerable potential influence of the sociological perspective in leading one to question personal beliefs and routines. Routines and beliefs may be taken for granted, but they may not be performed or adhered to with any great intensity or seriousness. To a significant extent, action and the world view may become devoid of meaning. A sociological orientation to the world can, and sometimes does degenerate into a cress cynicism. The existence of virtue is discounted. Human action and belief are described in terms of underlying interest, social and cultural indoctrination, and delusion.

Given that the sociological perspective contains the seeds of a profound nihilism which questions the objective validity and truth of particular definitions of reality, how can it serve to enlighten and enhance a Catholic world view? It has been argued that both the sociological and the Catholic perspectives share the maxim that we are in but not of this world. The sociological approach identifies the comical and inauthentic qualities of social reality. The Catholic approach applies the doctrine of other-worldly asceticism. One could label this as the elective affinity position. Two independent perspectives which in many respects are contradictory seem to reinforce each other in a crucial respect.

A sociological awareness, in this view, intensifies Christian faith by providing yet another justification for believing that this world is not to be taken seriously. There are two major criticisms of this position. 1) A radical interpretation of the sociological perspective serves to undermine all meaning systems pertaining to this world and any other world. A radical sociological historicism precludes taking any sphere seriously, whether empirical or super-empirical, given the fact that any meaning system is specifically grounded in a socio-historical context. Recognizing the plurality of meaning systems at any one historical era makes it exceedingly difficult to develop criteria for the validation of any one system versus alternatives. 2) The conclusions of the Vatican II theological conference encourage the individual to take this world seriously. The emphasis on social justice bears witness to such a worldly orientation. The World is neither inherently good nor evil. The World is what individuals and individual Catholics make it. Every effort should be made to create a thoroughly Christian domain. While detachment from particular worldly entities or ideologies is emphasized, engagement in the World is certainly given theological legitimation.
CATHOLICIZING SOCIOLOGY

How can sociological work be imbued with religious meaning? Those of the compartmentalist position argue that the two are in nature, like consumerism and hedonism, which pose direct threats to a Catholic way of life, and those forces which are potentially liberating, such as educational opportunity and urbanization, which can lead to a reconstructed Catholic world view. By the macro-social dimension we mean the implications of these socio-cultural forces: 1) for the church as an institution, and 2) for institutionalizing Christian values in American society and the world.

In terms of the cybernetic model, sociology energizes and provides feedback to Catholicism by explaining how the immutable is filtered through or mediated by particular socio-historical contexts. Sociology specifies the influence of socio-cultural forces in delimiting, circumscribing, and concretizing the way in which Catholicism is experienced. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church has traditionally been wary of confronting the secular world. More and more Catholics are involved in professional commitments in various academic disciplines and vocations in the temporal sphere. However, there has been a relative lack of recognition of the role that sociology might play in their spiritual life. It is true that social justice advocates in the Church have cited Marxist and other sociological analyses of inequality as legitimation for a church-directed political movement. Many of these analyses have been impressionist and polemic, with little systematic effort to connect sociological insights with Catholic dilemmas. On the characterological level, philosophical and psychological approaches have carried the day. The cause of sociological enlightenment has far to go within the clergy, and among the educated Catholic population and the more traditional Catholic lay population.

How can sociological work be imbued with religious meaning? Those of the compartmentalist position argue that the two are
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The control or information function of Catholicism in sociology can be best understood in the context of legitimation. Catholicism can provide an explicit, affirmed meaning to sociological investigation. Catholicism confers meaning by establishing standards of justification for engaging in sociological analysis and by positioning absolute principles and guidelines for human conduct in terms of which historically specific social arrangements can be assessed. Legitimation involves both motivation and interpretation. Motivation constitutes the initial control state of the cybernetic process. The interpretation phase constitutes the final control phase of the cybernetic process.

Such a notion of Catholic legitimation could be greeted with widespread alarm and scorn by the sociological community. For some, sociology must be value-free in the sense that it is concerned exclusively with empirical truth, and must divorce itself from any ideological bias. Such sociologists fail to recognize that scientific rationalism is itself an ideology and a form of legitimation. Other sociologists recognize the inevitability that sociological work must be guided and assessed in accordance with ideological concerns and principles, provided that one utilizes the correct ideology or one worthy of toleration or acceptance. We believe that most sociologists do not view Catholicism as fitting into either category. The future marginal position of a Catholic sociology alternative in an already-pluralist discipline is not our present concern. We must focus on the creation of a Catholic sociology movement. We hope that our thesis will serve as a manifesto which will inspire like-minded sociologists to enter and support such a movement.
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