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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF UNCERTAINTY

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The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.
By Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Garden City, New York: Double-
day & Co., 1966. vii, 203, $5.95; paper $1.45.

I

The social construction of reality begins with problem-solving. Solving prob-
lems involves attributing new meanings to objects in the environment. When, for
example, a man first discards his fig leaves for animal skins, and finds the win-
ters more endurable because of the change, then animal skins take on new mean-
ing for him. And by discovering or constructing new meanings in this w a y, a
man becomes in the process aware of his own subjective role in making sense of
his world. When, however, a meaning loses its newness, when it ceases to be
the possession of one or a few and becomes incorporated into the everyday,
shared routines of many, then people encounter the no longer new m e a n i n g as
objective reality. Of course, what is "real" varies widely from c u l t u r e to
culture, but within any one c u l t u r e it is not generally taken as p r o b l e m a t i c.
Rather, the members of a given society confront socially shared meanings as a n
objective facticity—as part of the "world out there" which they must m a s t e r if
they are to get along. This objectiveness of shared meanings is only especially
obvious in formal learning situations. Here the emphasis is on absorption, n o t
discovery. The participants—teachers and pupils—rarely think of themselves as
ascribing socially-constructed meanings to objects; rather, they view the process
as one of transmitting the "true" meanings of things to the uninitiated. What has
happened, in effect, is that what was once a nominalistic situation has become a
"realistic" one; what was once subjective meaning has been rendered into objec-
tive "fact." (p. 89 [All page numbers in parentheses refer to The Social C o n -
struction of Reality.])
In the view of Berger and Luckmann, this transformation has important social
consequences: it gives rise to social institutions which both administer and claim
to embody objective reality rather than someone's previous subjectivity. Such
claims formally legitimate on-going institutional behavior. Institutionalized b e-
havior is habitualized interaction based on shared and sanctioned meanings. But
there arises the necessity of inducting new persons into the subjectively s h a r e d
universe of meaning which underlies all institutionalized behavior. "The problem

of legitimation inevitably arises when the objectivations of the (now historic) order are to be transmitted to a new generation." (p. 93) For example, X and Y are two persons from different social worlds who begin to interact. At first their interactions are fluid and problematical. Neither knows what to expect of the other because neither knows what meanings the other will attribute to their situation. Hence, both actors at this stage are keenly aware of the role of sub-jectivity in interpreting the world and taking the role of the other. Over time, however, their once problematic interactions become habitualized and shared meanings develop. Both X and Y learn to take for granted as objective facts their reciprocal roles in institutionalized interaction. But in order to induct young Z into their on-going and by now habitualized routines, X and Y find it necessary to articulate the now shared meanings that underlie their joint activi-ties. They expect young Z to learn and to accept their legitimations. Hence, what was originally but the expression of X and Y's puzzled subjectivity has be-come an institutionalized "social fact" for young Z.

   This dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity which underlies institutional be-havior rests upon a typology of knowledge. Following Schutz, Berger and Luck-mann distinguish two forms of knowledge. The first consists of those categories or typifications with which the individual makes sense of the on-going, "here-and-now" world around him and in terms of which he is wont to conduct his daily routines. In this sense it is "everyday" and commonsense knowledge, the tested-validity for which each individual may personally vouch. In pointed contrast with the Marx-to-Mannheim tradition, Berger and Luckmann argue that, sociological-ly speaking, such knowledge deserves priority:

   . . . the sociology of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what
   people "know" as "reality" in their everyday non- or pre-theoretical lives.
   In other words, commonsense "knowledge" rather than "ideas" must be
   the central focus for the sociology of knowledge. [p. 15]

Naturally, every individual's commonsense knowledge is not coterminous with every other individual's, although there is a broad overlap in any given society.
   As the basis of naive, on-going, institutional behavior, commonsense knowl-edge is pre-theoretical. There are, however, inherent limitations in common-sense knowledge that recurrently turn it into theoretical knowledge.[1] The first involves the fact that commonsense knowledge must be passed on to the young. As we have seen, this means that it must be presented in an objectified theoreti-cal form if the young are to be properly instructed. The second limitation in-volves the fact that commonsense knowledge won't do when actors try to make sense of the larger significance of their actions and interactions.
   For example: X buys cheap and sells dear, as does his competitor Y. Their habitual interactions set up a market situation. When new participants must be instructed in the commonsense knowledge shared by X and Y, and when X and Y themselves cast around for the larger significance of their interaction, then their market situation gets interpreted in more abstract and general terms—in this particular case according to the doctrine of laissez faire. Thus, while buy-ing cheap and selling dear is X and Y's commonsense at a particular histori-cal moment, the ideas associated with laissez faire constitute the theoretical

knowledge which permits them to integrate their commonsense-based, daily
routines into a larger   meaningful whole. Like all institutional legitimations,
the theory of laissez faire lends cognitive and normative validity to a particu-
lar type of routine, everyday behavior (in this case buying cheap and selling
dear).

Institutional legitimations vary in their scope and societal importance. At
the lowest level, there are legitimations of those relatively unimportant institu-
tions which explain the commonsense routines of designated actors in designated
places at a moment of historical time. At the highest level, institutional legiti-
mations explain the commonsense routines of all men who have ever lived, will
ever live, and are alive now. They also explain everything else in the universe
and thus constitute a "symbolic universe."

> The symbolic universe is conceived of as the matrix of all socially ob-
> jectivated and subjectively real meanings; the entire historic society and
> the entire biography of the individual are seen as events taking place with-
> in this universe. [p. 96; emphasis in the original]

All legitimations tell an individual what significance his daily routines (based on
commonsense knowledge) have in a much broader framework.   Obviously,   an
individual cannot know such things for himself. He is inevitably hemmed in by
the frontiers of his own unavoidably limited experience. To locate his routines
in meaningful time and space, the individual must occasionally step outside t h e
framework of his everyday knowledge based on pre-theoretical commonsense un-
derstandings. Commonsense fails him. Institutional legitimations make it pos-
sible for him to know things about which he has no everyday experience and about
which his commonsense knowledge does not inform him.

Everyone, then, lives in both a commonsense world and a world of theoretical
legitimations. Take Jones the truckdriver, for example. As a working   man,
Jones "knows" about many things that bear on his job—about the relation of load
weights to speed, about road and traffic conditions, and about dealing with police
in various states. Jones also happens to be a Catholic. This entails "knowing"
many mundane things bearing on religious observance, but also "knowing" in a
vague sort of way that there is some "higher power" than himself;   that   t h e
authority of this higher power— Christ— has been invested in his church's hier-
archy and that, harsh as the existing order of things is, it is roughly according
to divine plan. Thus what Jones "knows" about his religion—vague as such knowl-
edge is in comparison with his detailed commonsense knowledge—is extremely
important for it gives him a frame of reference for interpreting his routine acts
sub specie aeternatis.   In Berger and Luckmann's terminology, such knowledge
constitutes an institutional legitimation of the highest order.

According to Berger and Luckmann, the function of this second type of knowl-
edge is to defend the reality of the commonsense world. Although they assign a
position of priority both in time and in theoretical importance to commonsense
knowledge, it cannot, however, stand on its own feet since events from beyond
the realm of commonsense are constantly threatening the commonsense world.
Death is the exemplary case for it "posits the most terrifying threat to   t h e
taken-for-granted realities of everyday life. The integration of death within

the paramount reality of social existence is, therefore, of the greatest impor-
tance for any institutional order." (p. 101)

In distinguishing these two types of knowledge, and focussing upon the prior-
ity of the commonsense type, Berger and Luckmann claim to break cleanly with
the sociology of knowledge as orthodoxly defined. They are uninterested   in
"epistemological questions on the theoretical level" and "questions of intellectual
history on the empirical level" (p. 13) — the usual concerns of the sociology of
knowledge.   Derived from Marx, the sociology of knowledge has   traditionally
interested itself in the situational determination of knowledge. In   practical
terms, this interest has involved efforts to translate the objective social position
of a given individual, social group, or collectivity into its subjective perceptions.
The movement was always from the world "as such" to a subjective world. How-
ever, Berger and Luckmann take a nominalistic position. They are uninterested
in rooting cognitions in objective social positions. This position dramatically af-
fects their conception of the sociology of knowledge.

The principle advantage of the Berger-Luckmann formulation derives   from
their substitution of an interactionist process for mechanical determination. They
are interested in the conscious process whereby knowledge is created, acquired,
taken for granted, doubted, and, finally, rejected. This processual   approach
lends to their writing a convincing sense of fluidity and dynamism which is absent
from earlier writings of the orthodox stamp in which knowledge is viewed as deter-
mined by the social position of the knower. The orthodox texts frequently served
as a weapon for the radical unmasking of the ideas of political or   ideological
adversaries. The validity of a given set of ideas could easily be challenged by
calling attention to the social position and interests of its adherents. But this
type of determinism posed an unshakeable dilemma: If the root proposition of
the sociology of knowledge — a one-to-one correspondence between knowledge and
social position — was valid, then the sociology of knowledge was itself simply   a
reflection of the position and interests of its claimants.[2]

Approaching the sociology of knowledge from a nominalistic perspective, Ber-
ger and Luckmann avoid this classical dilemma. They do not attempt to bridge
the chasm dividing the "real" world and the subjective world. What, then, deter-
mines whether a person will know a thing? His social position, to be sure. But,
social position does not make an appearance as an inherent, Kantian "category of
the understanding." Different world-views compete for public favor. A world-
view achieves hegemony when it defeats its rivals. One may defeat intellectual
rivals in numerous ways: by disproving them, out-shouting them, terrorizing
them into silence, monopolizing mass communications, etc. These tactical out-
comes determine which people will know what things. Ideologies result from the
domination of institutions which mold thought. This domination is readily analyz-
able by conventional sociological approaches.

The Berger-Luckmann approach takes consciousness seriously. People experi-
ence theoretical knowledge as a process marked by perplexity, confusion, and
search. They do not consciously experience a mechanical determination of their
thought. The classical reduction of thought to social position inevitably lost con-
tact with this experienced reality. One might, for example, attempt to explain
the scientific discoveries of Galileo in terms of the economic conditions of his
time. But Galileo himself, we can feel certain, experienced his search as a

purely intellectual endeavor.

    These advantages of the Berger-Luckmann formulation are achieved, however, at the expense of a certain loss of scope. They do not propose a s c h e m a which will automatically enable us to ascertain what sorts of knowledge will appear i n what sorts of societies. "Without proposing an evolutionary scheme," they mention mythology, theology, philosophy, and science (the Comtean sequence) as "conspicuous types of conceptual machinery." But they go no further in this direction; indeed, they cannot. Berger and Luckmann are themselves aware that their work is a manifesto whose principle contribution will depend upon the extent to which the ground they have broken is paved over by successors. (p. 186) They are calling for empirical studies of the specific processes which result in the hegemonic domination of specific social institutions. Such studies would represent a new approach to the sociology of knowledge. [3]

                                    II

    To this interactionist approach to the sociology of knowledge, however, Berger and Luckmann tack on certain postulates, derived ultimately from Comte, which serve to extend anomie theory into the sociology of knowledge. The   emphasis here is on psychological universals resulting in a drive to know. Berger a n d Luckmann are obsessed with a demonic vision of social uncertainty—a state o f mind which seems to them basically unpalatable to social actors. Hence t h e y postulate a kind of drive-reduction mechanism which, when uncertainty rears its head in society, causes actors to reduce or eliminate the source of their discomfort by reestablishing certainty.

        The primacy of the social objectivations of everyday life can retain its
        subjective plausibility only if it is constantly protected against terror.
        On the level of meaning, the institutional order represents a s h i e l d
        against terror. To be anomic, therefore, means to be deprived o f
        this shield and to be exposed, alone, to the onslaught of nightmare.
        [p. 102]

This is strong language. Its imagery is religiously inspired. Man facing t h e cosmos needs a social interpretation of reality in order to face down the terror of a meaningless existence. Ultimately, the drive toward the type of knowledge that transcends the commonsense level derives from existential terror—not from class struggle . This is an important departure from Marxian formulations. It is, also, the one objective fact of human existence which imposes itself upon human cognition.

    This way of approaching cognition eventuates in a simple alternation model of social change. Periods of institutionalized certaintly alternate with periods of mass uncertainty. For example , in one period institutional life revolves about mythology as its highest level cognitive motif. A shared mythology permits all of the actors to link their separate commonsense worlds into a   m u c h wider symbolic universe. Belief in the dominant mythology provides a c t o r s with the shield they crave against the terror of existential anxiety. This idyll

continues for ages. At length, however, it gives way to a period of mass un-
certainty. The old mythological universe has been challenged by a new-fangled
theological universe of meaning. People come to lack a simple faith in anything.
They become sceptical, questioning, unhappy. Lacking epistemological certain-
ty, they experience existential anxiety. This anxiety induces them to   redouble
their quest for certainty. Utlimately, this period of mass unrest gives way to a
third period in which certainty is reestablished under the sway of a dominant theo-
logical motif. People no longer experience existential anxieties. This theologi-
cal epoch persists until mass uncertainty revives, thus beginning the second stage
of the cycle once again.

Berger and Luckmann find that uncertainty exists in societies chiefly because
of the competition of rival definitions of reality held by competing groups. Inter-
nally, each group has its rigidly espoused world-view. But in the   interstitial
fringes between them, social conditions are generated that are propitious for
mass uncertainty. This way of putting the matter is congruent with Berger a n d
Luckmann's underlying supposition that certainty and the drive for certainty are
the characteristic modes of human cognition, the equilibrium trying to reassert
itself. It suggests, by implication, that groups cannot be constituted a r o u n d
epistemological uncertainty. In their cycle, societies spend long, anxiety-free
periods of time dominated by certainty producing institutions and short, unhappy
periods of time dominated by mass uncertainty. People have brief, unhappy en-
counters with uncertainty which drive them to seek epistemological   certainty.
This drive eventuates in the reestablishment of institutionalized certainty, which,
in turn, permits people to exist without having to face existential anxieties.

In periods of institutionalized certainty, professional theorists who are at-
tached to the established order mediate between individuals and the world of
nonroutine reality. These established theorists develop   ideas which permit
rank-and-file people to know many things beyond the realm of their common-
sense experience. Hence, the rank and file routinely avoid the   horror of
groping without guidance in an entirely uncharted cosmos. They are relieved
of responsibility for finding their own meanings in the cosmos and in   s o c i a l
life. In periods of social turmoil and unrest, rival coteries of   established
theorists are often found to be providing contradictory symbolic universes of
interpretation to the masses. Moreover, in periods of t u r m o i l,   n o n -
established intellectuals appear, each grinding his separate axe.   Sophists
compete with established theorists for a hearing, and with one another for a
mass audience. Sophists who found or join successful mass movements b e -
come, in turn, establishment theorists of certainty. But, in the   c h a o t i c
interim, the clang and clash of opposing opinion makes the man in the street
very uncomfortable indeed, since it exposes him to   e x i s t e n t i a l   t e r r o r.
Hence, challenges directed at establishment intellectuals in periods of   mass
unrest are followed by the emergence of a new class of thoroughly established
certainty theorists in the ensuing period of social tranquility.

This suggests that the principle difficulty of Berger and Luckmann's   w o r k
is their lopsided emphasis upon the production of social certainty to the neglect
of the processes which repetitiously create mass uncertainty.   T h i s imbalance
has conservative implications which reflect the Comtean source upon w h i c h
they have drawn. Instead of attending to the independent role of uncertainty in
social life, Berger and Luckmann emphasize   the magnificent tableau of social

knowledge as it is maintained by myriads of tireless laborers. When ants build their nest on a well-travelled path, vehicles travelling the route re-peatedly knock down the nest. Marveling at the industry of ants who dutifully build up their nest, Berger and Luckmann neglect the equally industrious per-sistence with which passers-by routinely kick it down again. Hence, we never get a look at the passers-by in their structured persistence, only at the mar-velous determination of the ants. The "social construction of reality" repre-sents cognition in its positive phase. But people have repeated opportunity to exercise these positive faculties only because their intellectual constructions are chronically subject to collapse.

III

The foregoing remarks lead to a simple dichotomy between the sociology of knowledge (as Berger and Luckmann conceive it) and the sociology of uncertainty. The former takes as its subject matter what people know to be true and the man-ner in which they fashion and maintain that objective truth. Hence, an important concern of the sociology of knowledge is those theorists (priests, journalists, teachers, politicians, etc.) who specialize in providing objective truth to those who have a need for certainty. Following Berger and Luckmann, we might label the relationship between theorists of certainty and their true-believing fol-lowers as the "social organization of universe maintenance." (p. 116)

The sociology of uncertainty does not refer to a principle of cognitive indeter-minism. It refers to a reserved attitude toward cognition. The sociology of uncertainty would focus on popularly held beliefs which are not known to be ob-jectively true, for example, the belief that in navigating it is helpful to behave as though the earth were at the center of the universe. It would concern itself with those theorists whose productions jeopardize "objective" reality as momen-tarily constituted and also with processes which routinely rupture the ordinary man's knowledge of reality as derived from his daily cycle of existence, e.g., the impact of an educated Negro upon a race bigot. The specific task of the sociology of uncertainty would be to investigate the circumstances under which ordinary people repudiate accredited truths duly passed down by certified ex-perts, give hearings to "crackpots," and fashion for themselves new versions of out-of-experience reality. Relations between scientific types oriented to doubt, and priestly types oriented to certainty would similarly come under review, as would the transmission of the scientific attitudes from specialists to nonspecialists.

From this perspective, the state of social knowledge at any moment in time could be viewed as the resultant of an on-going Manichean struggle between the forces of social knowledge and those of uncertainty. The state of social knowl-edge in the future would depend upon how contemporaries resolve the contest between knowledge and uncertainty. Such a perspective would simplify analy-sis by permitting a sharper classificatory focus upon types of knowledge. At one extreme, ideology would become the ideal type of knowledge as such. At the other, the working hypothesis would become the ideal type of uncertainty. Although it is clear that one can derive very different groups and social move-

ments from these polar alternatives, either type makes social action possible.
People may act because they know the truth, or because they know what appears
to be true. One may wear animal skins in winter because one knows them to be
warmer than fig leaves, or because one has not yet encountered a fig leaf equal-
ly warm. The first reason rules out experimenting with fig leaves. The second
does not. However, the second reason introduces existential anxiety because
one's commonsense knowledge (fig leaves are drafty in the winter) lacks episte-
mological certainty. As a form of knowledge, ideology is characterized by such
concepts as faith, trust, the sacred. In contrast, uncertainty is indicated by
such concepts as verification, plausibility, "as if," and the profanation of the
sacred.

Reifying social uncertainty in this way serves to correct Berger and Luck-
mann's conception of it as simply the absence of certainty. Uncertainty need not
be seen in this way. Instead, it can be thought of as a world-view—the basis of
a whole way of life and an entity autonomous in itself. This perspective has im-
portant implications for how we interpret the on-going struggles between rival
certainties. They become instead struggles between certainty and uncertainty.
In the view developed by Berger and Luckmann, a state of uncertainty and mass
unrest has no dignity in itself because its significance derives entirely from the
state of institutionalized certainty to which it ultimately gives rise. If, however,
we assign an independent and autonomous place to social uncertainty, we can
reverse this interpretation. Such a reversal suggests that periods of insti-
tutionalized certainty derive their significance from the periods of mass unrest
to which they ultimately give rise. Are we, for example, to understand the
Renaissance as the period between the Middle Ages and mass totalitarianism? Or,
shall we understand the Middle Ages as the period before the Renaissance? Does
the Renaissance have a dignity and an autonomy of its own, or is it simply char-
acterized by the breakdown of medieval certainty and the gestation of totalitarian-
ism? Since great achievements in art and science occurred during the Renais-
sance rather than the Middle Ages, the Renaissance has a prima facie claim to
autonomy and priority, if these are to be assigned at all.

True, social stability depends frequently upon the successful organization of
universe maintenance (i. e., on the establishment and maintenance of certainty).
One might allege this dependence as sociological grounds for supporting the pri-
ority of social certainty. Yet, social survival is functionally more important
than social stability. Social survival often depends upon the successful cultiva-
tion of widespread uncertainty as when "new occasions teach new duties." [4] Under
such circumstances, societies cannot "survive" without lending the support of
organized social power to uncertainty—i. e., to provoking rather than truth-
maintaining ideas. Hence, it is by no means clear that mass uncertainty is
always "dysfunctional for social survival" or that exponents of uncertainty-
provoking ideas cannot achieve a legitimated and autonomous role within an
adaptive, progressive, humane social order. The cataclysms of social change
are not, after all, produced by the profanation of the sacred. They are produced
by delaying too long that process of profanation. Organized intellectual subver-
sion of monolithic social orders may be viewed as highly adaptive for the social
order, just as thought is adaptive for the individual. [5] These considerations sug-
gest that conditions conducive to mass uncertainty merit independent attention and
ought not to be understood as failures of social solidarity.

Although Berger and Luckmann self-consciously operate out of a dialectical model, the Comtean impulse underlying their work leads them to overlook some of the logical implications of their own thinking. These oversights result from their effort to harness the methodology of Marx to the conservative paradigm of Comte.[6] Uncertainty is, first of all, produced recurrently by the very processes they discussed. Rival certainties produce uncertainty. Granted that certainty theorists peddle their verities to anxiety-ridden masses, the theory producers themselves cannot escape the occupational necessity of recurrently stepping beyond the pale of established verities. In producing certainty for the masses, theory producers are personally required to grapple with ambiguity, uncertainty, and chaos. Having so grappled, they may emerge with a tidy package of labeled reality which will serve nonproducers of theory as a map of out-of-experience reality. This division of labor relieves the man in the street of the painful necessity for concocting his own vision of the cosmos. But it does not entirely eliminate the work. Someone has to make the effort. Hence, even in the most superficially placid and self-satisfied societies, someone is handling sacred symbols in ways which border on the profane. Indeed, the very handling of sacred symbols opens the door to intellectual deviation in the long run. Scribes turn into heretics. And in science, the conservative process of filling in an accepted paradigm issues eventually in the radical overthrow of that paradigm.[7] These processes are structural results of institutionalizing certainty. As such, they merit a stature of independent dignity.

The process of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization which Berger and Luckmann describe is empty and formal because the actors in their system never grasp the implications of their own history. The drive for certainty eternally reconstitutes itself in new forms as variations on a basic theme. Yet, what is the moral of Berger and Luckmann's story? It is that objective certainty in human cognition is an illusion, that knowledge is in a constant process of evolution. This moral implies that the underlying quest for certainty which motivates the whole process is the basic illusion.[8] Oddly enough, people are closest to this message in those moments of existential anxiety when they feel themselves losing faith in the objective truth of what they had previously believed and find themselves face to face with the role of their own subjectivity in defining a fluid reality. Sooner or later, people must cease to pursue the phantom of certainty and acknowledge the role of their own subjectivity in attributing meaning to the universe. Pursuit of certainty produces a recognition of the fatuousness of that pursuit.

Even though they borrowed Marx's method, Berger and Luckmann did not follow the logic of his self-transcedent dialetic. In classical Marxism class struggle is taken only as the "history of all hitherto existing society." This phase of history transcends itself when the proletarians achieve an explicit awareness of the theretofore merely latent message of history. The proletarians are joined at the decisive hour by that "portion of the bourgeois ideologists who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole."[9] The logic of their own dialectic similarly requires Berger and Luckmann to transcend their own premises. Their argument requires them to conclude that the drive for epistemological certainty will itself someday be transcended by those who have "raised themselves to the level

of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole. Since Berger and Luckmann have already raised themselves to this level, we might have expected that institutionalized uncertainty would emerge as their vision of the future.

The basic emotion of existential anxiety is, moreover, only a subjective meaning which some people attach to a universe bereft of objectively constituted meaning. This emotion is not a mirror of the objective universe expressing itself in human consciousness. Berger and Luckmann should understand this since it is based on their own repeatedly stated premise. Nonetheless, they exempt existenial anxiety from the treatment they accord all other objectified meanings. Hence, their treatment is self-contradictory at the root. Their stated premises leave them no alternative but to conclude that the search for objectively constituted meanings is itself the basic illusion of the historical drama.

From the perspective of the classic line of the sociology of knowledge, one might inquire why Berger and Luckmann choose to assume that the experience of existential anxiety is not historically conditioned. Perhaps they feel this emotion very strongly themselves. In any case, their attitude toward the secularization of knowledge is hardly welcoming. It suggests the mixed emotions called up in those of a basically religious nature by the collapse of the sacred temple in which they once enjoyed a pastoral certainty. Such persons naturally view the prompt reestablishment of social certainty as a social objective of high priority. This desire is entirely understandable, even among those who do not share it. But, when written large, it results in a faulty sociology.

The beneficent effect of monolithic certainty upon the anxiety-ridden masses is a favorite theme of inquisitors. This theme ought not to be mistaken for sociology. Authoritarianism is not the image of man as such. People are not innately afraid to think for themselves. A world with no idols would not be such a bad place to live in. Illusion is a curse. Berger and Luckmann have written an important book. But, the model it provides will not become adequately sociological until they obtain a firmer sense of the creative potential of disorder, unrest, and mass uncertainty.

NOTES

1. Cf. Antonio Gramsci, The Modern Prince and Other Writings, New York: International, 1967, p. 60 ff.

2. Reinhard Bendix, "Social Science and the Mistrust of Reason," (University of California Publications in Sociology and Social Institutions," vol. 1, no. 1), Berkeley: University of California, 1951.

3. I think they would approve of Tamotsu Shibutani, Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor, Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1966. They would find Wilensky's study of organizational intelligence insufficiently dialectical, but a welcome shift in the right direction: H. L. Wilensky, Organizational Intelligence: Knowledge and Power in Government and Industry, New York: Basic Books, 1967.

4. Cf. Herbert Blumer, "The Field of Collective Behavior," Chap. 10 and "Social Movements," Chap. 22, in Alfred McClung Lee, ed., Principles of Sociology, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1951.

5. John Dewey, How We Think, Boston: D.C. Heath, 1910.

6. Cf. Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, New York: Doubleday, 1968, vol. I, esp. pp. 117-18; Robert A. Nisbet, The Sociological Tradition, New York: Basic Books, 1966, p. 56 ff.

7. Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1965.

8. Cf. Leszek Kolakowski, The Alienation of Reason, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968, esp. pp. 215-16.

9. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works, Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1961, vol. I, p. 43.