

Book Reviews

D. Stanley Eitzen *In Conflict and Order: Understanding Society*. 1978, Allyn & Bacon 598 pp

Here is another good book of seasoned sociology which, whilst flavouring its weighty digest of society with the hot herbs of the conflict theorists, adds a soupcon from the consensus stewpot to provide a well-balanced meal for humanistic psychologists. For Eitzen, from Colorado State University, knows that we have been as over-fed on the sauce of sociological de-sanctification as we were previously by the gourmet growth folk: collectivism and individualism are healthy when assimilated in mixed proportions only. Thus he aims to present a synthesis of the conflict and order perspectives with which intellectuals, especially in America, have viewed society.

So he describes its structure; the processes of change; its social institutions like the family, religion and education; and its balance of stability and change. He often uses tables to contrast what the conflict theorists think and what the consensus believers say, although this form of exposition counterproductively always make me feel that such categorization by a clever academic, and such polarization by the mandarins themselves, thus merits the mocking of their science which proletarians tend to make. Surely sociology, the proud

science of desanctification, itself needs demystifying? It uses a distancing jargon of weighty words which only the cognoscenti can understand, yet it divides individuals and groups up into labelled sections of society in ways that can only be seen as simplistic.

Thus, in discussing religion, Eitzen gives a few paragraphs to "the consciousness revolution", adding that Tom Wolfe has called this "the age of ME", without really analysing how this itself contains within its total field principles of cohesion and consolidation as well as those of change and conflict. When he aims to synthesise disparate elements, he is stimulating, but does he get the mix right? He writes "the family will continue because it will be the one source of stability, or primary relations and of *irrationality* in a shifting, secondary and overtly *rational* social world." My underlinings indicate not that I either agree or disagree with him, but that I think it could be equally argued that these two words could be transposed, and that, either way, we have no means of knowing which is more true. . . now. . . where. . . for which group? For some families are rational, others not; some social organizations are irrational, others not.

There seems to be similar sociological short-sightedness with regard to understanding deviancy. If deviance is only that which does not conform to social values or expectations, then if those norms change in a period of culture shock, deviance will also have to change: a long-lasting marriage will become the minority condition and the person who neither fiddles expenses nor smokes or drinks will become the outsider. Sociological constructs of rules and legitimizations are surely superficial explanations of man's alienation from himself and society, even though these may describe the forms this may take. To say that "nothing inherent in a particular act makes it deviant" seems to suggest an insensitivity to the human condition which is also reflected by the fact that the book has nothing to say about fundamental social processes of mourning, and only 5 out of 595 pages on mental illness. But the concomitant of change is loss, so in "understanding society" we must at least recognize that to move forward maturely into a new society without crises of breakdown depends on a far deeper understanding of man's nature and needs.

Mary Conway

Joseph H. Berke. *I haven't had to go mad here*, Penguin 1979.

This is a book about different approaches to madness. It starts off by slamming social attitudes, drugs (especially Chlorpromazine), ECT and psychosurgery, and then goes on to discuss more positive alternatives for treatment - Arbours, Arbours Crisis Centre, international centres similar to Arbours, Family by Choice (and other network ideas) and relations between the generations.

It is well-written and practical, giving up-to-date details, phone numbers and so on. As far as it goes, it is absorbing and even inspiring.

It is, however, politically naive in the extreme. All it has to offer, in the face of massive institutionalized oppression, is a few houses, mostly in North London, which could easily become swamped as a result of the publication of this book. Obviously we are glad that such places exist, and it would be nice to think that more might be set up as a result of inspiration by this book - I hope that will happen - but really it is the social forces which produce these symptoms which need to be look at and tackled, if the oppression is going to stop.

Berke himself gives the example of "drapetomania", a disease of Negro slaves on Southern plantations, which made them want to run away! It was not Arbours that was needed to cope with this disease, it was abolition of the slave trade.

O. Void

Irma Tweedie: *The Chasm of Fire*

Reshad Feild: *The Invisible Way*

both £3.95 published by Element Books Ltd. The Old Brewery, Tilsbury, Salisbury Wilts. SP3 6NH

Some people like gurus. I don't. Am I envious? I ask myself. Would I like people to sit in awe and listen to my taped pronouncements, as I have seen happen at AHP conferences, and as the authors of these books do in rapt attention? Somebody once said to me "you say the most banal things in a most profound manner" and I have never forgotten it. How right she was!

Some people seem to thrive on gurus and these books are living proof of how beautiful it can be, salvation from misery and self-doubt, following the way of their Sufi teachers. They are beautifully written, specially the **Invisible Way** by Reshad Feild, and if a faith you must have, I can't think of a better one.

Hans Lobstein