Book Reviews

The Voice of Conscience

Ethics, Politics, and Social Research. GIDEON SJOBERG, Ed. Schenkman, Cambridge, Mass., 1967. xviii + 358 pp. $8.95.

There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, of an American professor on sabbatical leave who decided to visit Oxford. One afternoon he fell into conversation with a don who was very distinguished, very old, and very deaf.

"And what do you teach, young man?" asked the Englishman.

"Business ethics."

"I'm sorry, I didn't quite hear you."

"Business ethics!"

"You know, I must be deafer than I thought," said the Oxford professor. "I keep thinking you're saying 'business ethics.' "

It is only recently, I think, that many sociologists have seriously come to grips with the skepticism directed toward the ethical state of their discipline and their claim that sociology is a pure, objective, and detached science. They are just beginning to examine systematically the moral implications of their field and of their research methods; and the close ties that exist in fact between value judgments and social science are only beginning to receive the frank discussion they warrant.

Ethics, Politics, and Social Research ranges over the great variety of situations in which sociologists at work can no longer accept the bland assumption that knowledge for knowledge's sake is the ultimate norm, to be accepted without any question, and that the professional life of the social scientist has neither ideological cause nor social consequence. The university, the business corporation, the Army, the government agency, the community—these are the settings in which the authors of these collected essays explore the moral quality of the social scientist's motives and his impact on the lives of the people he studies.

In the past, questions about professional ethics in the social sciences were largely confined to issues of honesty and competence and a rather rudimentary sense of fair play. The use of the word *subjects* by social scientists for the people they studied—sometimes abbreviated to *Ss*—was not only a convenience but also a symbol of the desired scientific detachment; that it also frequently reflected a manipulative mode of thought went unobserved. The danger from politics in the environment of social science research was assumed to lie largely in the possibility of censorship and of restrictions on free scientific inquiry. Such issues are examined in some of these essays—for example, in the article by Jane Cassels Record concerning research institutes and pressure groups and in the piece by Ted R. Vaughan on the University of Chicago Law School jury study. But in this book these issues are discussed much more profoundly, more searchingly and openly than is usually the case; and, in addition, the emphasis is largely shifted from the harm that society or an individual sociologist might do to the social sciences to the harm that the social sciences might do to society and particular persons. In essays on the LSD experiments at Harvard, on Project Camelot, on the Wiggins-Shock study of the aged, and other research projects, interest is primarily centered on—for example—the exploitation of others, secretive intervention, the misuse of scientific findings in the service of selfish interests, and the invasion of privacy.

What has happened, I believe, is that over the last several decades there has been a great change in the attitude of many people toward their government and formal institutions of power. And along with this—beginning, perhaps, after the second World War and accelerating in the '60's—there has been a far-reaching erosion of the comfortable relationship between science and society. In an earlier and more innocent era, it was possible to assume that the findings of science were likely to be used in the service of a society which, however imperfect it might be, was pushing in the direction of a just and humane social order. Questions of ethics and politics could be more or less ignored—or so it was thought—since science existed in a democratic climate that not only sustained it but provided hope for its wise employment. But now, for many people, that assumption has broken down, and 1984 or some variant of it is no longer a nightmare of what the future might be but a glimpse of a not too distant reality. The scientist has at last come to know tragedy, and a hermetic concern with the state of his "discipline" will no longer suffice.

This shift in mood is particularly marked in the social sciences because they have for so long made a great point of being "free of value judgments," "objective," "rigorous," and so on, all in a desperate attempt to win the laurel crown labeled science. The implications, however, of this new awareness of the place of the social sciences in society are still far from clear; and the ethical and intellectual concepts to handle the problems it generates have not yet been worked out. The inevitable result is a certain fuzziness in Sjoberg's collection of essays, for as the authors explore this new territory they sometimes seem to lose sight of one another. Yet this defect is quite outweighed by the fact that by and large the essays are written with an integrity, a sophistication, and a hammering concern for the truth often lacking in the literature of sociology. Perhaps it is a paradox that the closer sociology comes to the realization that it is not the "value-free" discipline it thought itself, the more sociology moves toward the rigor and the significance it has sought for so long.

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Ice and Landform

Glacial and Periglacial Geomorphology. CLIFFORD EMBLETON and CUCHLAINE A. M. KING. St. Martin's, New York, 1968. xvi + 608 pp., illus. $12.75.

Evidently intended as a textbook, this work is also a useful reference on glaciers and glacial processes insofar as they create land forms. The authors have avoided stratigraphy and environment, two aspects of former glaciation that are currently enjoying wide popularity among scientists. Yet while confining themselves to geomorphology they have produced a good, compact