

Book Reviews

Sociopolitical Theory in a Cybernetic Framework

The Active Society. A Theory of Societal and Political Processes. AMITAI ETZIONI. Collier-Macmillan, London; Free Press, New York, 1968. xxvi + 698 pp., illus. \$10.95.

By an "active society" the author means a society that is "aware," "committed," and "potent"—that is, one that is dedicated to chosen social purposes which its citizens consciously share and that exercises power in an ever-increasing actualization of those purposes. In developing around this concept what he variously calls a theory and a theoretical framework, Etzioni draws together main lines of sociology and political science along with the newer science of cybernetics.

Sociologists for the most part have concerned themselves with social collectivities, whether interacting groups or networks of groups (movements, institutions, and so forth), and have dealt with them on what is termed a distinct level of analysis, such that elements are taken that refer to the collectivities rather than the individuals that comprise collectivities. Political scientists have been concerned with power, which they have examined on two levels: At one level of analysis they have tended to assume a monolith rather than a collectivity, taking "the state" or the government as a single unit, or a small number of power-oriented or power-exercising units such as political parties or bureaucracies; at the other level the unit has been the individual man or men of power. Within Etzioni's cybernetic framework, societies and the state become subject simultaneously to the concern of theorists. Controlling overlayers, control networks, control centers, consensus formation, implementation mechanisms, elites—such terms constitute the language of Etzioni's effort to present what is certainly the next major concern of political sociology. This is a major work in which

the author attempts, more or less successfully, to summarize and codify increasing numbers of more partial, more specific empirical studies and more ambiguous "systems analysis" concerns of social and political theorists.

The book is wordy, but an interested reader will find in it much of value. The review of various approaches, past and present, in sociology and political science is excellent. The footnotes are in an essay-like European tradition and are extraordinarily valuable for the social scientist who has some familiarity with the literature. The layman as well as the social scientist will find this book provocative in its treatment of pressing world problems—war, alienation—and of the question whether the postmodern society is and must be a mass society or a pluralistic society. Etzioni has important things to say about "inauthentic" features of modern life. Throughout the book he attempts to engage the thinking of Marxists as well as the more complacent of his bourgeois colleagues in social science. He seems to be on the side of the questioning, criticizing, rebellious youth who see the social analyses of the latter as an apology for a sickening and destructive social system and of the former as conventional and superficial. He in fact dedicates his book to "the Active Ones . . . in particular my students at Columbia and at Berkeley."

Yet as Etzioni's own essay in the *New York Times Magazine* about the Columbia "rebellion" made clear, he is not a hero to the young activists, and this major work, despite its break with "old guard" perspectives and ideology, will not, I think, win them to him. For what he has not integrated into his analytical scheme is what to many of them is the key unit—the individual in society. It is that level of analysis that serves the professional theoretical rationale for a separate sci-

ence of psychology or social psychology; so one cannot fault Etzioni by pointing to examples of theoretical frameworks that treat individuals as integral components of social-political units and vice versa, for there are no such theories. Yet I find his acceptance of a traditional distinction between micro and macro units not persuasive, and I think his almost unconscious dismissal of the individual as at another, less important analytical-theoretical level will be less than appealing to the most intellectual of the rebelling young.

Etzioni's approach holds fast to the traditional notion that social theorists and theories can and should be value-free. While his major concept is of a society that is attempting consciously to realize its values and in a way that brings into the process as many citizens as possible, he is careful to avoid giving qualitative marks to the values themselves. He dismisses racist South Africa and Nazi Germany from a possible roster of active societies not because their values are destructive but on the grounds that such societies are not really "active"—they have elites that impose values on masses of people, and "to be active is to be responsive, and an oppressive society is unresponsive by definition and hence reduces its members to passivity." As he further says, most societies are short not on values but on their realization.

It is exactly here that the reviewer faults the modern, increasingly popular cybernetic-system approach of which Etzioni's work is an exemplar. The book is a tour de force, and graduate students who want to "make it" professionally may read it in some awe and accept as natural and right the fact that it avoids in its major concerns any effort to turn the theorist or researcher to the urgent tasks of analyzing critically the values, the goals, and the consensus-building operations of various societies. But students like those he addresses in the dedication feel a need for cybernetic-system theorists to ask "Active for what?" and then to attempt answers according to personal values. This is exactly what Etzioni sees as leading to a terrible situation wherein "the social sciences would be divided into as many ideologies as there are sets of personal values"—a prospect much less disturbing to the young than that posed by the terrifying processes of technological dehumanization. Underlying the perspectives of *The Active Society* is a kind of liberal optimism

that puts its author and the young rebels on different planes, between which lies the generation gap.

The reviewer sees as the other kind of weakness in Etzioni's major theoretical stance the use of basic concepts and the formulating of propositions that are extraordinarily difficult to operationalize and test. This kind of problem has preoccupied generations of social scientists in their efforts to do social science with the very abstract and so-called grand theories of such theorists as Marx, Freud, and, to take a more recent example, Parsons. Yet such problems provide the grist of the intellectual's mill, and if the work is sufficiently compelling or engaging the necessary scientific effort may follow and provide the breakthrough for the master's thought to be made useful rather than simply provocative. It may be, despite Etzioni's wordy and often complicated prose, that such will happen with this work. Anyone who wants to know what kind of pursuit many social scientists are likely to be engaged in over the next decade or so, at least, should read *The Active Society*.

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Medical State of the Nation

Currents in American Medicine. A Developmental View of Medical Care and Education. JULIUS B. RICHMOND. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1969. xviii + 142 pp., illus. \$5.50. Commonwealth Fund Book.

This view of the state of the nation in medical affairs is a clinician's judgment on the health of American medicine. The author is neither historian nor sociologist, but he is an extremely able physician who has been at the eye of the storms in medical education and medical care as teacher, as medical school administrator, and most recently as director of Project Head Start and for Health Affairs at the Office of Economic Opportunity. As a participant for many years in the teaching institutes of the Association of American Medical Colleges, he has wrestled with the conceptual problems of the day in medical education and has attempted to conquer them. As a government administrator, he has had responsibility for one of the most significant efforts to implement change.

The aim of his book is "to attempt a historical analysis of evolution of medical services, education, and research in the United States since 1900 and, on the basis of this analysis, to raise questions for the future development of medicine as an institution in our society." There have been a number of such efforts, but this is certainly one of the best. The essay is consistently both objective and optimistic as it reviews the "educational revolution" from 1900 to 1940, the "scientific revolution" of 1940-1960, and the "consumer revolution" of 1960-1968. Particularly cogent is the discussion of the impact of the Flexner Report (published in 1910) and the Report of the Committee on the Costs of Medical Care (published in 1932); the former had great and far-reaching effects that are still felt on medical education, whereas the latter, as the author points out, has yet to be implemented today. He documents the good and the bad results of the massive federal commitment to medical research since World War II and suggests, quite logically, that the consequence of leaving the consumer out of the benefits of government spending enjoyed by practitioners, medical schools, and medical researchers is the current demand that the fruits of this effort be now made immediately available to the people, particularly to the poor. The analysis of legislative efforts to accomplish this end in recent years is particularly well done.

In looking to the future the author-clinician proclaims a favorable prognosis for further improvement in American medicine. He points out that the next new emphasis will very likely be on preventive health services. He has reservations, however, about the role of the teaching medical centers in this phase, and believes that community-based programs may hold the answer, if they are provided with institutional sponsorship. This is a curious view for a medical dean to hold at a time when the greatest difficulty is actually the lack of leadership in the delivery of health services. If the medical schools do not take the responsibility, it will inevitably be seized by others, possibly to the detriment of professional standards. The author does look upon some current problems with alarm, such as rising costs of care and overutilization of services, but he places faith in solutions by a so far nonexistent and nebulously conceived Presidential Council of Health Advisors.

As a whole, though, the essay is a

useful analysis by an enlightened and perceptive participant. If it fails at all, and it does not in terms of its stated goals, it is by neglecting the pressing crisis of population growth, the shortages in health manpower, the inequities of the nonsystem of health care, the growing expense of an irrational distribution of services, and the lack of leadership from the medical profession. Perhaps there are no satisfactory answers to these problems today, and the next generation will have to find new approaches.

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Proteolytic Enzymes

Natural Proteinase Inhibitors. ROSEMARIE VOGEL, IVAR TRAUTSCHOLD, and EUGEN WERLE. Translated from the German edition (Stuttgart, 1966) by Express Translation Service. Academic Press, New York, 1968. xiv + 162 pp., illus. \$10.

Interest in protein molecules that are capable of specifically combining with proteolytic enzymes to form inactive strong complexes is at present quite high. It stems in part from the recognition that important biological functions other than digestion and catabolism are carried out by proteolytic enzymes. Among these functions is the turning on (and off) of various enzyme and hormone systems and thus the control of many biological activities. Protein inhibitors can in turn control the controllers. Since the study of control is the height of scientific fashion, the study of protease inhibitors has become fashionable.

The second impetus for the study of protease inhibitors stems from the great advances of techniques in protein chemistry, which now allow us to ask and occasionally answer detailed questions about the nature of the enzyme-inhibitor interaction. Until quite recently this was not a profitable endeavor, but present techniques of isolation, separation, sequence study, protein modification, fast kinetic analysis, and x-ray crystallography raise realistic hopes of sizable success. Since the association of proteases with their protein inhibitors is one of the simplest and most specific protein-protein association phenomena, a rather large effort to achieve this success appears to be worthwhile.

These considerations have spawned a huge literature and have interested