Book Reviews

Self-Portrayal

The Behavioral Sciences and the Federal Government. National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., 1968. xviii, 110 pp. Paper, $3.25. NAS Publication 1680.

The Behavioral and Social Sciences. Outlook and Needs. A Report by the Behavioral and Social Sciences Survey Committee under the auspices of the Committee on Science and Public Policy, National Academy of Sciences, and the Committee on Problems and Policy, Social Science Research Council. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969. xvi, 320 pp., illus. $7.95.

Knowledge into Action. Improving the Nation's Use of the Social Sciences. Special Commission on the Social Sciences of the National Science Foundation Board. National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1969 (available from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C.). xxiv, 95 pp. Paper, 75¢.

Politics of Social Research. An Inquiry into the Ethics and Responsibilities of Social Scientists. RALPH L. BEALS. Aldine, Chicago, 1969. x, 230 pp. $6.95.

The Uneasy Partnership. Social Science and the Federal Government in the Twentieth Century. GENE M. LYONS. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1969. xviii, 396 pp. $8.50.

For most of their history, the social sciences have displayed the properties of social movements as much as of sciences. Like all successful movements, they have gradually developed an organizational structure and have created places for their functions in many societal institutions. More recently, many of the original objectives of the movement became ideas whose time had come. In numbers, resources, and influence, the social sciences have grown far more rapidly during the last two decades than have most other forms of intellectual enterprise. As they have become larger and more consequential, they have increasingly become objects of public attention: the social sciences themselves have become social issues.

Since the mid-'60's, convergent developments have brought a number of such social issues to a head. The five works reviewed here embody the responses of the science Establishment to these developments. Three of these volumes are committee reports, and the two by individual authors also stem from inquiries undertaken by scientific organizations on these issues. The book by Beals is based on a study he undertook in 1966 for the American Anthropological Association, of which he is a past president. Lyons's volume stems from his service as executive secretary of the first of the committees with whose reports we shall deal: the Advisory Committee on Government Programs in the Behavioral Sciences (the Young committee, from the name of its chairman), appointed in 1965 by the National Academy of Sciences–National Research Council "to review the organization and operation of behavioral science programs in the federal government."

The second—the Behavioral and Social Sciences Survey Committee (BASS)—was appointed in late 1966 to assess the current status and future needs of the behavioral sciences, as part of a series of such reports on major fields of science for the National Academy's Committee on Science and Public Policy. The BASS survey was far more elaborate in its organization and execution than its kindred inquiries. There was a 21-member central planning committee of well-known behavioral and social scientists, as well as panels of from 6 to 12 members covering each of 10 disciplinary fields. (Independent reports on the status and needs of each discipline are being published commercially as separate volumes.) The BASS committee, with a tiny full-time professional staff, nonetheless mobilized extensive resources in support of its work. It contracted a questionnaire survey to establish concretely the scope, cost, and resources of university activities in the behavioral and social sciences. It also undertook a small "pilot" survey in the Boston area of economists and psychologists to find out the nature of activities in these sciences that were being carried on outside the academy and the government. The organization of the BASS effort, furthermore, permitted a far-flung net for capturing contributions to its work from others; 60-odd social scientists, in addition to the 82 panel members, provided help of sufficient substance to be listed as contributors in the central report, and many others are credited in the reports of the individual panels.

The third committee—the Special Commission on the Social Sciences of the National Science Board (the Brim commission)—was oriented more exclusively to questions of the utilization of the social sciences than was the BASS committee, but less exclusively in the context of governmental programs than was the Young committee.

The Russell Sage Foundation—its past and present presidents, staff members, and money—had a role in all three committee efforts and supported Lyons's book as well. That is not altogether surprising, since for many years the foundation has devoted much of its resources to improving the social utility of the social sciences, particularly sociology. The Wenner-Gren Foundation, which supported Beals's study, has had as great a role for anthropology. The many names listed in these volumes, furthermore, could provide the basis for a sociometric analysis of several interlocking branches of the social science establishment and its peripheries which were influential here, and, equally interesting, those which were not (*1*).

It should be noted that these reports, conveniently for gainsaying the influence of collusion, but inconveniently confirming an often-deplored tendency of social scientists, are at variance in some of their recommendations. For example, the major recommendation of the Young committee for a unifying center in Washington in the form of a National Institute for Advanced Research and Public Policy disagrees with that of the Brim commission for "several" specialized research institutes, or the quite different routes the BASS committee points to the same objectives. In the main, however, where they speak to the same current issues, these committees are much closer together than, say, the views of many representatives of the social sciences who have testified on these issues be-

fore various congressional committees, not to mention those heard in radical caucuses of social science associations. All three reports, as an example, opt for an expanded role for NSF rather than for the proposal of Senators Harris and Mondale for a National Social Science Foundation. (The BASS committee, to be sure, threatens a switch to support of a separate NSSF should NSF fail to support basic social science or multidisciplinary approaches to social problems adequately.)

Whether the positions the committees share with each other but not necessarily with a consensus of leaders owe more to their composition than to the inevitable results of particularly intensive study and reflection one cannot say. It is in any event not the purpose here to review or weigh the many policy recommendations found in these reports. (The news columns of *Science* have covered them from a policy standpoint at the time of their release.) The recommendations already represent so careful a weighing and distillation of ideas, views, and comments from so many colleagues that any one reviewer's reactions to them should be of small moment. To the extent that these reports are targets of criticism, it is likely to come from those who do not share their full and implicit acceptance of the legitimacy and utility of social science work that is both heavily supported by the state and responsive to the problems that beset the polity. Even were I so inclined, I could add little new to this currently well-developed vein of criticism. The purpose here will be rather to comment on these studies as exercises in institutional self-examination and self-portrayal by sciences whose stock-in-trade includes the examination and public portrayal of social institutions.

Of social developments that brought to a head the issues of social science, most central and immediate was the collapse of the Cold War as a primary basis for organizing and legitimating national action. Three of the five volumes under review have their origins in reactions to the Project Camelot affair. This attempt by the Army to enlist basic social research for "counterinsurgency," and by social scientists to turn this Army interest to their own interests, would have caused scarcely a ripple of protest in the heyday of the Cold War. By 1965, however, it was the *cause célèbre* that Beals (p. 4) describes as "the turning point" for the social sciences. It marked a shift, in the concerns voiced by social scientists, from gaining greater acceptance and resources to preoccupation with questions of "On what terms?" and "What for?" The reaction to Camelot, from different quarters in different admixture, involved the feeling that the values and independence of the universities had become corrupted by their growing dependence upon the state, and rejections of values and policies of the state. Matters have moved so rapidly since these committees did their work that a large part of the academic community will regard their reports as archaic in the ideological presuppositions that underlie not only their selection of issues but also their very definition of social science and its social roles.

The Young committee report and the book that Lyons based on his research for that committee describe how they were led from an initial concern with relations of the social sciences to foreign affairs to consider more broadly and fundamentally the relations of social science to government. Beals's book reflects to a degree the special concern of the anthropologist with government-sponsored research abroad. In a number of respects, however, his work has even broader scope than that of the Young committee or of Lyons. Along with a number of other inquiries precipitated by the Camelot affair, Beals goes beyond questions of relations of social science to government, per se, to raise basic questions about the ethics and politics of social research.

That the post-Camelot inquiries invariably ranged far from the immediate issues of involvement with military and foreign affairs suggests that unsettling influences were not confined to erosions of the Cold War consensus. Correlative was a new public salience for a staggering array of domestic problems—race, crime, poverty, urban unrest, youth alienation, population explosion, and the rest. Each of these quotidian problems—not excluding the lately popularized problems of human ecology—has been a venerable preoccupation of the social sciences. Social scientists, long since adjusted to crying in the wilderness about them, were disoriented temporarily when they became central objects of public attention and policy. The new mode and new intensity of the public recognition of these problems called for approaching them "scientifically"—tradition, intuition, and laissez-faire would no longer do. The Brim commission's report and parts of the Young and BASS committee reports as well see the social sciences as in the main poorly equipped, poorly organized, poorly situated, poorly motivated, and just plain too poor to respond adequately to these demands and challenges.

To be sure, the "poor-mouthing" in these documents plays a much smaller role than in pleas for the social sciences in previous decades, and has an altogether different quality. There is no longer a hopeless abyss between all immediate needs and any prospect of achieving the resources to tackle them. That some fields of social science may get too much support, have too many demands made on them, and be allowed to influence affairs too much or prematurely is seen not only in prospect but as having already occasionally occurred. There are the (merest) beginnings of a consideration of rational allocational priorities—a form of thinking impossible when the ratio of legitimate needs to achievable resources seemed to approach infinity. Even if there be some truth in the charge that Establishment social science is ready to sell its scholarly birthright, it clearly demands better terms than a mess of pottage. Rather than the supplicant tone of the pauperish past, the pleas for more resources for the social sciences in these committee reports are couched in a style reminiscent of the proposal for a large grant submitted by a wealthy and prestigious institute. A selection of past accomplishments is proudly displayed; prestige-laden names are dropped; "needs for knowledge" are expressed in terms of both scientific and social importance; grand albeit vaguely stated contributions are promised; and budget figures are given that, however vast, clearly can cover only the first phases of approaches to the solution of these vital problems.

Proposal-writing typically counterposes the faults of old approaches against promising new departures. In the past, a common foil for programmatic reports on the social sciences was "unscientific" social science. In most fields, behavioralist, systematic, quantitative, "scientistic" orientations are still in combat with intuitive, impressionistic, moralistic, essayistic brands of scholarship. These committees, however, waste precious little breath on

these old battles. The ascendancy of "scientific" social science is taken for granted. Only mopping-up and consolidation operations are seen as needed in this old civil war, such as raising the distressingly low quality of those recruited for careers in social science, and particularly their often low inclination and preparation for mathematical work.

The old campaign against nonscientific social science remains most in evidence in Lyons's examination of the relations of social science to government. This follows from the historical organization of much of his book. He rehearses the struggles of the century to achieve the scientific status for social science that the committee reports are inclined to take as their starting points. He sees these battles as by no means over. Much of his treatment of the current scene also pits the "progressive" forces of modern social science against "conservative" resistances, within as well as outside of the disciplines. Lyons's own approach, notably, does not follow the model of the hero of his saga, but is rather a model of traditional discursive and prescriptive political science scholarship.

Where the three committee reports see the main need for a break with the past is in the near-total domination of the social sciences by disciplinary, academic organization. The importance of transcending the self-serving, fractionated, and lone-scholar-centered features of disciplinary research leads each of these committees to recommend new organizations for applied social science work. The old divisions and insular orientations of university social science would be abandoned. Research and training would be divided up in accordance with the ways in which social problems must be confronted in dealing with them. New varieties of applied social scientists would be trained and new roles created for them in various sectors of society.

More than most other scientific fields, the social sciences are creatures of the universities, and more particularly of traditionally organized disciplinary departments. The more "social" the social science, the more exclusively is it university-centered. Thus, arranged in order of the percentage of their members in educational employ listed in the *National Register* (*2*), we have anthropology, 81 percent; sociology, 73; linguistics, 73; economics, 58; psychology, 56; and statistics, 34. Social sciences are also stickier than most others in reserving the term "scientist" (including, until 1968, the standard for *National Register* listing) to Ph.D's. Although recruitment to the social sciences may be affected by the principle "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach," the most prestigious forms of doing tend to be reserved for certain of those who also teach. The status structure of the social sciences, even more than in other fields, operates toward reserving opportunities for research, applied as well as basic, to the scholar based in a ranking graduate department of his discipline. Those called upon for advice on important policy and action are usually drawn from these same ranks.

In keeping with a social-psychological characteristic of marginal and aspiring groups, social scientists tend to be holier than the Pope in their espousals of the basic doctrines of the worlds of pure science and the autonomous university. How remarkable, then, that from committees composed of gray eminents of the disciplinary establishment should come what seems a fundamental attack against the academic-disciplinary edifice itself. Perhaps it is precisely men who reach pinnacles of their own discipline who come to see across disciplinary lines and outside the confines of the academic institution in looking for new worlds to conquer.

But currently there are few alternative structures for the organization of work or thought in the social sciences as they bear upon practice. There are only the most rudimentary counterparts to the relations of the physical sciences to engineering, or of the life sciences to medicine and other practicing professions. To the extent that real, rather than ideal, definitions of the social sciences can be given, it must be done, as it is in these reports, by giving definitions of each of the disciplines that in aggregation are called the social sciences. To study what they are and how they function of necessity involves the major focus the BASS report has on activities within disciplines. Political and social realities also dictated that the BASS survey be organized as a committee of committees from each discipline.

The domination of the work of this committee by the academic perspective overly restricted its vision, however. In its assessment of the state and needs of the social sciences, the committee concentrated its data collection and appraisal on activities of Ph.D.-granting university departments. It gave much narrower attention, when any at all, to activities organized on interdisciplinary (or cross-, multi-, or nondisciplinary) lines and to those that go on outside of the academic sector. For example, its questionnaire survey of research activities of social scientists in professional schools omitted altogether engineering and journalism, to which the Brim commission devoted chapters. Neither of the reports paid much attention to the roles of the social sciences in schools of architecture and planning.

To a considerable degree, as the methodological appendix of the report makes clear, the selective attention of the BASS committee's questionnaire survey of research activities reflected difficulties of locating and identifying even those social science activities in universities other than those linked to the Ph.D.-granting departments. Precisely the absence of any national system or international uniformity of structure other than the disciplines made it difficult to identify a population of such potentially eligible institutions to which to send its questionnaires or for those officials who received them to be sure that their institutions had some activity going on which qualified for inclusion in such a survey. For information on government research, the committee relied on scanty secondary data. For nongovernmental, nonacademic research, it sponsored but made almost no use of a "pilot survey" in one metropolitan area.

A major question about which we learn little from any of these reports is what will be the functional and subject-matter boundaries between research activities that will continue to have an identification and linkage to academic social science and those that will come into the territory of such knowledge enterprises as systems analysis, operations research, or "policy sciences."

Mounting internal opposition to allowing the social sciences to have the social functions that these committees seek to expand is currently the major factor affecting these boundaries. Only Beals and Lyons pay much heed to this internal revolt, and they have gravely underestimated its spread and intensity. Perhaps the volatility of key conditions is suggested by the fact that Lyons's *The Uneasy Partnership* was cited in

an early draft of one of these reports as a work in progress with the title "The Growing Partnership."

Compared with the BASS report, the Brim commission's slim volume is more educational concerning involvements of the social sciences with other institutions—the professions, government, business and labor, community organizations, and the public. The Young committee report, on the other hand, is devoted almost exclusively to prescriptive discussions of governmental social science policy and organizational structure; it does not tell us much about what social scientists are doing for, with, or to the government, or vice versa. Lyons's book has taken the job of presenting in detail much of the background material that presumably formed the inductive bases of the Young committee's conclusions and argument. His study of social science policy and organization seems largely based on observations of the advocacy that has taken place on such matters, and the resulting organizational decisions. This approach attends to matters that have been made visible by official attention and policy contention. It contains much more historical information about government social science programs and how they grew than has hitherto been available. But Lyons's method is deficient for gaining understanding of the patterns activities have taken and the reasons for them that are not discerned or not voiced by contending participants in the events themselves.

The Young committee report (p. 2) avers: "There is no assumption, in this review . . . that knowledge is a substitute for wisdom or common sense or for decision-making." None of these volumes risked having "wisdom" and "common sense" displaced by knowledge from systematic empirical study or social science theory. Only the BASS report resembles in any degree the kind of report social scientists would make if they were assigned the task of studying an institution other than their own. Even in this case, there is heavy reliance upon *acquaintance with* one's subject rather than *knowledge about* it in a scientific sense.

Since these committees were addressing themselves primarily to noncolleague audiences (to the extent that is possible when one knows one is being attended and judged mostly by colleagues), each report undertakes elementary didactics about the social sciences. This is done by defining each discipline in terms of its subject matter and—helpfully, since such definitions lack exhaustiveness, exclusiveness, and full consensus—by descriptions of modal (and modish) kinds of things done by scholars belonging to each of the fields. Given the vast scope of subject matter of the social sciences, the multiplicity of things that social scientists do, and the intense wrangling in each discipline over what it should be and do, none of these reports really has space to handle these didactic efforts very well. But apart from this, the social sciences are not described as comprehensively and coherently as they might have been had they been defined in social scientific terms, rather than simply in terms of subject matter and method, and approached accordingly.

None of the reports presents a review of social scientific theory and research on the social sciences specifically, or on science, intellectual institutions, and the role of knowledge in human affairs generally. Although some social scientists have complained that these subjects tend to be neglected by their colleagues, the neglect has been far from total. Economics, political science, and, most extensively, sociology have all been brought to bear on social scientific activity as an object of study. In selecting and citing sources, Beals alone has made choices largely on the basis of their knowledge value rather than their status value. At the other extreme, the footnote references in the Young committee report are exclusively to official documents, except for a couple of references to individuals writing in a high official capacity.

These books thus are a commentary on the social sciences not only through the wisdom and common sense which is manifest in good measure in each of them, but also in the extent to which by their own example they show the ability of social science to "suggest ways for men to organize their relationships more satisfactorily and to improve the adaptive process itself" (BASS, p. 272). Their limited success in this regard is due not so much to the low potential of the social sciences as to an inclination toward use of the wise man or the committee of wise men rather than the (far more costly) mechanisms of comprehensive scientific study. Even the BASS committee, which was most clearly oriented to and best endowed for the job of collecting and analyzing data on the social sciences, could only begin to develop a firm base in knowledge for the many topics at issue. That it, in turn, had to turn to ad hoc data-collection efforts for much of even the most elementary descriptive facts regarding what social scientists are doing, where, and with what resources and wants was another major limitation of its ability to base its findings on social science knowledge. Yet none of the recommendations of the BASS report or the other committees call for remedies to the gaps and weaknesses in statistical series on science which so obviously hampered their work or for other extensions of the state of knowledge regarding the social sciences and their social roles (*3*). (These reports do not incur the charge often leveled that social scientists hedge any conclusions with the statement that "further research is necessary.") This is another indication that social scientists thus far are only slightly more predisposed to rate social scientific knowledge about their business as one of their most critical needs than are people in those social endeavors that social scientists seek a mandate to inform.

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References and Notes

1. In the small world of the social sciences, these ties extend yet further; those disposed to point with alarm to a certain coziness in such affairs may not be surprised to learn that the writer of this review was also enmeshed in this web of associations. He gave comments or consulted in other ways for each of the committees; he reviewed their reports in draft; his organization (although with no involvement on his part) conducted the questionnaire survey for the BASS committee; he has been conducting research on the economics and politics of the social sciences under a grant from—who else?—the Russell Sage Foundation; and he could add several other direct and sociogrammatic connections with the work of these committees. To be sure, in undertaking this review, the reviewer regards himself as no more biased a commentator than if he were reviewing an ordinary work of scholarship in a field to which he was a contributor and in which a particular sponsoring foundation to which he owed his support had a special interest. Students of science policy are after all a fairly small band, those of social science policy a smaller one (although only slightly smaller, given the weighty representation of social scientists in the science policy field), and those engaged in the social scientific study of the social sciences as social institutions a very much tinier one indeed.
2. *American Science Manpower: 1968* (National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1969), p. 29.
3. An appendix to the BASS report, however, is "A proposal for a later evaluation of this report and for future surveys." It calls for a second survey ten years hence and an evaluation of what happened as a result of its recommendations as well as of the validity of its diagnoses and forecasts. The BASS committee has also deposited its data with the National Academy of Sciences for use by investigators of the social sciences.