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SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS OF G. MANNOURY.

Mannoury may be best-known by his outstanding investigations in the field of signification and mathematics, he may also be known as a marxist and a politician, yet all his life he was steadily occupied with his socio-philosophical conceptions, of which he has endeavoured to present us a recapitulation in his "Relativisme en dialektiek". This was published in 1946, when the author had already attained a great age. Social and sociological considerations are however to be found scattered in all his publications. That was inevitable. In view of his far reaching social interest, of the sociological background of his marxist conviction and of his views on language, it was not possible for him to refrain from sociological remarks.

When intending to penetrate more exhaustively into Mannoury's conceptions concerning human society, one has to take into consideration a few basic points of his thoughts.

In the first place he was and has always been a mathematician. Yet he did not intend to practise mathematics as an arid science of figures and units, that bars all contact with real life and living reality. His mathematics was more than the algebra and geometry we learned at school, and by which we did not go beyond juggling with figures and lines. Mannoury was the kind of mathematician who, like his compatriot L. E. J. Brouwer and the anglosaxon mathematicians and logicians of the school of Whitehead and Russell, look upon their science as a universal science, from which may be reached the deeper backgrounds of all being, and perhaps a solution for the major problems of all mankind. Mannoury intended to attain more comprehensive knowledge of social phenomena by applying mathematical ways of approach, as witnesses the title of his inaugural speech, pronounced at the University of Amsterdam in 1917: "The social significance of the mathematical way of thinking". Mathematics, he asserts, is a practical science. The mathematician may indeed restrict himself to an approach to

the external world by means of a kind of "numbering", leaving the sensitivity to the linguistic artist who is not "numbering" but carefully weighing words. The mathematician however has a task of greater importance (from a social point of view): he has to free thought from the bonds hindering it to yield its proper result, viz. a rational insight into mankind. The bonds that impede scientific thought are for instance the dogmas that replaced the old dogmas of the church. To-day, Mannoury alleges, we have given ourselves up to dogmas of a new kind such as determinism or "scientific" reason. We have to set ourselves free from these dogmas; if not, our thought will be doomed to an inability of further progress and eventually will die.

A second fundamental characteristic of Mannoury's thought is of course his love for signification, a science that by purification of the concepts of scientific and every-day language and by reflection on the idea of language itself endeavours to reach a more thorough knowledge of society and of the relationships between men. One of the major impediments of mutual understanding leading to a better community is the chain of misunderstandings that results from unreal pseudo-problems and the like. Improvement of the apparatus of contact called language was Mannoury's aim; herefrom follows his interest in artificial languages like Esperanto. The great importance he attached to the function of language, caused him to sometimes overemphasize its real place. Many old and time-honoured problems of human thought such as morals, aesthetics etc. are thereby wrongly, though critically correct (for Mannoury never failed in the careful handling of his words) reduced to language problems. This view was closely connected with his adoption of behaviorism.

A third fundamental principle of Mannoury was of course his marxism. Although he was too great an individual thinker to submit to the rules and interpretations of marxism from abroad, he continued to call himself a marxist and a communist until the end of his life. Marxism therefore accounts for the greater part of his sociological viewpoints and three points follow from it. In the first place Mannoury, since being a marxist, had to be an adept of certain sociologicistic views into the bargain. Certainly, his adoption of behaviorism made him introduce psychologistic tenets in his sociology, but it is questionable whether he ever succeeded in a reduction of all social problems to psychological conceptions. It is true that he said he used behavioristic terminology only because it is useful, while introspective terminology may be scientific just as well; nevertheless he was afraid that subjective elements might penetrate his propositions, a fear he shares with all other behaviorists, and which was one of the inducements to the

creation of behaviorism. Marxism also accounts for his meliorism. Mannoury quite emphatically stresses the idea that society can and must be improved by human effort. Whatever man is practising, it must be subservient to social improvement. Mannoury reveals himself to be a Hegelian, which is no wonder, for in his youth the Netherlands were almost overrun by Hegelian thoughts and the keen Hegelian propaganda of the Leyden professor Bolland. Mannoury of course, opted for the left wing of Hegelians, according to which the stern dialectical development of society will lead in the end to the harmony of communism.

Mannoury takes the line that all epistemological problems in science refer to the means of understanding, and any epistemological consideration should be antecedent to axiological analysis. Axiological analysis pertains, he asserts, to the social attitudes only, a viewpoint that straightway makes him a sociologistic thinker. Human understanding, being a reciprocal influencing of conceptions, is effected in a superconscious and a subconscious way. Superconscious understanding comes about by verbal language, such as indication and volition laid into the verbal act. Subconscious understanding comes about by the emotional-affective meaning of words, pitch, mimics, gesticulation, rhythm etc.

All knowledge, according to Mannoury, is intermingled with conceptual dualism. The events of nature (any external event) are considered by man to be subject to causation; our own being, on the contrary, is considered introspectively to be "life". When examining the external world we speak in an "it-language", when considering ourselves we speak in "I-language". The difficulty is that we usually speak in a mixture of I- and it-language, which results in all kinds of obscurity and pseudo-problems. Perceptions that pertain to our own body, the so-called perceptions of own behaviour, correlate generally with previous experiences and therefore underlie the so frequently favoured distinction between life and non-life. Mannoury holds this to be a pseudo-problem exactly because it is connoted to perceptions of own behaviour only. In this proposition he represents typical behaviouristic points of view indeed. On the other hand one is confronted here once again with a basic principle of his significant views. For the examiner's being unable to move beyond the perception of own behaviour, renders possible a dispersion of the meaning of his own words. Our innate or acquired psychical dispositions, which are to a certain extent contradictory, lead to an alternate narrowing and widening of the sphere of attention and therefore to a permanent reciprocal influence of super and subconscious feelings. This concep-

tual polarity comes to be transported by some particular and polar gradation of language into on the one side, an ideological way of expression and on the other side a general mathematical way of expression. Though he did not mention the names, Mannoury obviously refers to the famous distinction made by Windelband, between natural and ideological or moral sciences. Mannoury however, being a consistent significist, reduces this distinction as well to a polarity of lingual gradation.

Leaving epistemological problems, Mannoury finds in the psychology and psychiatry of the masses the foundation for sociology and the hope of and theory for improvement of society. In this case he sets forth typical Pavlovian ways of thinking, viz. he assumes it to be possible to direct human behaviour in any desired course if only the right means are used. Mass psychology and mass psychiatry constitute the sciences that are to examine these means. Of course, one should take care to be fully awake to the great dangers involved in any abuse of the results yielded by these new sciences: abuses that occurred in national-socialist and fascist countries show how far a psychopathologized nation may go, but nevertheless mass psychology is indispensable to the eventual harmonization of a communist society.

Mass psychology and mass psychiatry may show, he assumes, that all kinds of levelling of behaviour takes place between individuals and therefore inside society. In the long run, all behaviour becomes so much similar that no individual any longer may come to perception of own behaviour. The same took place since time out of mind, inside national, religious or social groupings of all kinds. This is what Mannoury understands by "mass". It follows that the behaviour of groups more and more comes to resemble natural phenomena, and therefore can more easily be predicted. In extreme cases even, mass direction may go so far that the individuals are no longer conscious of what they are doing, such as in times of war. Add to this that mass-behaviour-instincts, resulting also from groupsparallelism such as the instincts of adaption and of imitation and self maintenance, make the group still more receptive to the influence of leaders and to the glorification of those leaders. Since any social contact takes place by means of language and language is never a conscious ability but always super- or subconscious, it follows that many times the common herd collectively as well as the average of individuals privately will be unable of making a stand against the overwhelming suggestion of the verbal attitudes inside their group or nation. The tendency of behaviour-levelling, shown so many times by so many individuals to the

detriment of a harmonious society, urgently discloses the need of a mass hygiene which in future may prevent any mass psychotic phenomenon. Mass psychology and mass psychiatry should examine more precisely the optimum and most satisfying relationship between the leader and the mass in order to prevent any mass-social danger. Mass theory should, in addition make a careful study of the mutual psychic relationships between nations and groups: this study cannot be brought to a happy conclusion save by international cooperation and organisation. This science has to develop unfettered by any national, political or social influence. It has as its particular task to create an individual, able to cope with the influences that reach him as social attitudes or social stresses, and to arrive at an opinion unaided.

Finally Mannoury wants to make sociology a tool for the dialectic development of society. Although the marxist doctrine teaches quite readily that in the long run every society will by itself reach the state of harmonisation shown in a communist community, science may provide the means to facilitate this development, and to remove the obstacles that hamper the evolution of society as expected by marxism. This development takes place in three phases: a political, a social and a spiritual phase. The first one, based on the principle of unstinted cooperation to education of the mass-will carrying through the massvolition. This would be possible according to Mannoury's theory of the social-biological equilibrium. He assumes that the dispersion and the mutual noxiousness of classes, sorts and varieties of animals (including men), plants and micro-organisms, show a biological optimum, which, changing only slowly, lead to automatic regeneration. The same holds good concerning the behaviour of individuals and groups (a difference only gradual). He calls this the social-biological equilibrium. Mannoury hereby understands that if one unbiassedly examines this equilibrium inside human society, one can make no distinction between human and animal groups. If man always distinguishes between himself and the animals, he is only subject to religious and traditional prejudices. Regarding these viewpoints of Mannoury's one cannot close one's eyes to the impression that he is utterly subjecting himself to 19th century viewpoints concerning man, not taking into account any theory of man as presented in modern anthropology. Education of the mass-will is the more readily assumed by Mannoury, because he reduces all morals and all legal structure in society, to superconscious and subconscious lingual attitudes. A well-balanced society having reached its social-biological equilibrium, shows a whole of super-morals such as rules of conduct, accepted by all individuals without any personal opinion; an accep-

tation made possible by the sub-morals consisting in the sub-conscious valuation of words and verbal sequences. The political phase of dialectic communism has, accordingly, only to direct the super- and subconscious feelings and attitudes of individuals and society will all by itself evolve quite readily into the desired direction.

The next phase, as we saw, is the social one. The mass-will is like any individual volition to be considered as being under the influence of expectations of own behaviour. These expectations consist in psychic dispositions for regroupment of remembrances and perceptions. The processes of production and distribution are supported by these very remembrances and perceptions on the understanding that the forms of thought on which these processes are based, show a certain degree of stability and continuity. Successive forms of production moreover are in a continual interaction with each other. The social phase of dialectic communism, which may be characterized by a harmonisation of production and the bio-social-economic needs of individuals, may be reached only by immediate transfer of affects and therefore requires a well-measured system of mediate transfer by positive and negative influence on affects of the individuals, in order to conform their will into the right direction, i.e. the communist community. A situation of social equilibrium, based on such a system, will in the long run be adapted to the socio-biological needs of all individuals. This phase will display a high degree of local and functional interchangeableness. In order to maintain the equilibrium, infliction of will by means of enforcement and power cannot fail to be applied, to create a correction on any menacing interference of equilibrium.

Expectations of own behaviour of the mass, which is considered to be the aim of dialectic communism, cannot but ripen into mass-volition and mass-consciousness of equilibrium. The realization of communism requires as necessary condition the evolution of an ideology, of morals and legal conceptions in which the generalizing and individualizing ideas, inherent in our thought, have arrived at a harmonious solution. This is the last phase of dialectic communism, and is called the spiritual phase. It is the coincidentia oppositorum of Hegel's philosophy. The constitution of a world government follows therefrom and also a harmonized world economy. Its final solution is found in a harmonious combination of independence of thought and community of life, based on an optimum degree of community-sense of individuals; the society of mankind will have risen above all distortion that might threaten its happy condition.

While tempting to place Mannoury's conceptions in some sociological

school, one hits, of course some peculiar difficulties. In the first place because his views, on behalf of their consistent elaboration of the orthodox traditional marxist tenets, would find few partisans in the western world. The sociological conceptions that may be considered as similar to his, viz. the sociological school of behaviourism in the U.S.A. comprising adepts like Thomas Znaniecki, were no meliorists and their concepts were not created merely in order to facilitate social improvements. Mannoury moreover, never agreed with the further development of the behavioristic school when it started its analysis of personality, making the last-mentioned concept one of its basic ideas. No more can he be considered as eclectic, although he borrowed in several places the conceptions that suited him. His mathematical mind made him distrustful as soon as any trend in science developed into some irrational direction. This may account for the fact that he so persistently closed his eyes to new possibilities of scientific thought thereby becoming one of the most obstinate adherents of neo-positivism on the continent of Europe. In this sense he belongs to a by-gone period of sociological approach which left but a few, though important, traces.