

tribute anything of importance to the understanding of Whitehead, and is too unco-operative

with its readers to serve as the 'introduction' it seeks to be.

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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY, by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. *Allen Lane The Penguin Press*, London, 1967; reprinted 1969. 249 pp. 50s.

Berger and Luckmann have written what they call 'A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge', an introduction to an area and an approach in sociology that has received relatively little attention since the crucial work of Weber on the concepts of 'social action' and 'Verstehen', with the notable exception of Mannheim. The ritual homage that the social sciences have paid to the natural sciences has too long left us trying to cope with the complexities of social interaction in terms of mechanical models that even natural science no longer finds so appropriate. Even now there is a fascination in the 'real' data of statistics that tends to hold spellbound many sociologists, and leave explanation as a non-starter (what does it mean to say that 'people moving from working to middle class with increasing affluence show conservative political affiliations'?). Now, the work of a few phenomenologists with interests in the social sciences, particularly Schutz and Merleau-Ponty, has led to a much better appreciation of the value of looking at the intentional frameworks that people use, and the way in which they constitute their perception of the world—indeed, the way in which they construct reality. *The Social Construction of Reality* represents the first introductory text to this basic field.

I suspect that this is one of those many books that fall into the category of 'glorious failures': 'glorious' because it is a book that covers a vast area of relatively 'new' material for most social scientists, and does so in a systematic and coherent way; 'failure' because it is far too ambitious, and tends to slip towards a generality that says nothing. But failure is too strong a word; this is a book that tantalizes, and makes you hope for more. It tends to be written in a slightly 'journalistic' style, much like Peter Berger's earlier, and excellent, *Introduction to Sociology*, but nonetheless makes its points well and opens up a rich vein.

The book is in three main parts, after a historical introduction, and the first of these, on 'The Foundations of Knowledge in Everyday

Life', is really excellent in presenting a résumé of the phenomenological approach to social interaction. It obviously owes a great debt to Schutz, whose *Die Strukturen der Lebenswelt* Luckmann is translating, though the interested reader should really look at some of Schutz's own work himself, particularly the theoretical papers in *Collected Papers*, Vol. I, and some of the studies in Vol. II. The second section, on 'Society as Objective Reality', is also good, but at times runs dangerously close to giving too integrated a functional picture of society by focussing on the sharing of symbolic universes, semiotic systems, etc., and ignoring the discontinuities and differentiations that exist. But it is the third section that is the weakest, on society as subjective reality, and here the authors' own fields begin to obtrude, since much of their material is inadequate to the task they attempt. There is a notable lack of reference to recent studies in perception and cognitive frameworks, and even Festinger's work on cognitive dissonance gets only two passing references. Another lack is consideration of the more recent work in linguistics. Indeed, while criticisms are being made, there is one other aspect of this book that is more than a little annoying, and this is the deliberate lack of reference, and the banishment of the impoverished footnotes to the back of the book. Berger and Luckmann inform us that this was done to improve readability—but it simply does not. I fear there is an element of inverted one-upmanship here, and I see no reason why we should want to deny our specialist interests . . . though I suspect that a more crucial factor may have been economics.

However, with these few criticisms made, this is a book that everyone should look at. A little determination will remedy the weaknesses, and I suspect that this is one field we cannot afford to ignore. A good start, and I look forward to further work from this team, as well as to the completion of Luckmann's translation.

PETER SHELDRAKE

GUILT: Theory and Therapy, by Edward V. Stein, *George Allen & Unwin*, London, 1968. 238 pp. 32s. This is an invaluable book for the Christian psychologist, sociologist and, perhaps above all, for the confessor. Edward Stein sets out, after half a life-time of research, as he himself says, to discuss the origins and dynamics of guilt. Guilt has bedevilled *homo sapiens* since first,