passing academic fashion. That reflexivity has yet to find its final sociological and theological habitus, and Flanagan's reference to "this unexpected pilgrim's progress abroad in this culture of post-modemity" p.188) is surely a reflexion on himself as much as on current sociology. His journey continues. To judge from this book, and to adapt and apply Huysman's maudlin self-portrait to Flanagan himself, "I am still too much of a sociologist to become a monk, yet I am already too much of a monk to remain among sociologists".

- 1 Max Weber: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, tr. Talcott Parsons London 1930 and Gerhard Lenski: The Religious Factor. New York 1961.
- 2 See especial Gilles Kepel: The Revenge of God. Oxford 1994 and Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby: Fundamentalisms Observed Chicago 1991.
- 3 Paul Halmos: The Faith of the Counsellors. London 1965.
- 4 See David Ford (ed): The Modern Theologians (2nd Edition) Oxford 1996.
- 5 Graham Ward: Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory London 1996, and Mark C. Taylor: Deconstructing Theology. Atlanta 1982.
 Useful collections of essays are Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick: Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion London 1992 and Frederick R. Burnham (ed). Postmodern Theology: Christian Fault in a Pluralist World San Francisco 1989.
- 6 David Martin, John Orme Mills and W.S.F. Pickering: Sociology and Theology: Alliance and Conflict. Brighton 1980.
- 7 Cited in Flanagan op.cit p.199

Remembrance of Things Past Sociological Ken

Kieran Flanagan

In May 1996, addressing the central problems of faith, Ratzinger commented on the great disillusionment and non-fulfillment of hope that came after 1989. Covering issues such as pluralism and New Age religions, where god replaced God, Ratzinger observed that "if we consider the present cultural situation....frankly it must seem a miracle that there is still Christian faith despite everything". For him, relativism has now become the central problem of the faith. But the issues he raises also belong to sociology. It also has to deal with relativism, nihilism and the escape into the New Age, the unexpected spiritual impulses that mark the condition known as postmodernity. Uncertainty has arisen over religious affiliations that oscillate between pluralism and fundamentalism, both ambiguous responses to modernity. The relationships between theology and culture have been affected in an inescapable manner.

The Enchantment of Sociology is an effort to provide something oddly unwritten: a sociological reading of the link between theology and culture.

It was conceived against the moral and cultural despond of British society between August 1991 and Easter 1995. The theological mandate for the book, as Howes notices, came from Radcliffe's irenic hope for peace in the vexatious relations between theology and sociology. His belief was that sociology could "provide a locus for the encounter of gospel and the world" and that this would be accomplished through the internal transformation of the discipline itself.1 The need for sociology to re-think its place in its own field of deliberations relates to a wider sense of unsettlement in a society characterised by postmodernity where matters concerning spirituality, identity and community have become uncertain. Life has become a bit of a gamble. As Beckford notes, Pascal's wager is being re-played.2 These unsettlements have changed the biographical basis of doing sociology itself as it increasingly comes to reflect on its own spiritual and ethical deliberations. It cannot but reflect on what is happening in the culture it inhabits. Desire, self-actualisation and identification relate to a self desperately seeking to believe in something. The self is no longer at home with itself. In sociology, religion is no longer a side show of sects and secularisation.

But if sociology is at the edge of religion, its imagination might lead it to wander into the realms of theology. A nascent quest for God presents the sociologist with inconvenient questions which are inimical to the traditions of his discipline. What form of theology should express this sociological faith of seeking to understand God? What theological relief is there for the ever more anxious sociologist?

A typically gloomy Weber offers little spiritual relief for the angstridden sociologist of postmodernity when he observed that "no matter how much the appearance of a widespread religious interest may be simulated, no new religion has ever resulted from the needs of intellectuals or from their chatter." 3 Anyhow, famously, in his essay "Science As Vocation", scorn is poured on the analytically weary, the failed supermen of sociology, for whom religion is a rest-home, a retreat centre of refuge from the calling of the discipline. Religious belief carries a property of indignity for sociologists, a failure to live by analysis alone. But endless analysis is a hell on earth as it trundles along to no set conclusion. The picking up of the fads of sexual and cultural politics, and the rinds of ideologies, proffer no lasting kingdom. For some, something deeper is required, for as Newman might have said, even sociologists have souls, and in Divine ordinance even they cannot be considered immune from grace. But if grace is given, to what sociological end? To retire from sociology is enormously attractive, but then there are many monks but few sociologists dotty enough to think they have a grace-endowed vocation. If they have a religious vocation, to what theological end should it be turned? Again one turns to Newman. If he were writing now, he would have realised the need for some systematic evaluation of the reception of faith and doctrine and who better than the redeemed sociologist to supply this? His analysis might become an instrument of edification—a definite sociological calling, but one warm and well inside the rest-home of theology.

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Within this study of enchantment lies an unapologetic theology that might seem fundamentalist to Giddens for the lack of negotiation it implies. As the contributors note, this is a book with definite opinions. Such a definite sense of theology did not just emerge from sociological analysis. It came from elsewhere, in a way that necessitates disclosure, especially in a study that speaks so strongly of the importance of biography and reflexivity in sociological workings, but which says little, directly, of the religious sensibilities of the author. The study has a certainty and property of hope that stems from an unrequested and unanticipated conversion experience of this sociologist at twenty eight at Downside Abbey. Being of the trade, he scuttled back to Bristol to look up the type of conversion in William James. Through grace, this sociologist was dropped into theology and his vocation was to make sense of this situation. When reviewing Sociology and Liturgy, Jean Séguy wondered over the sociologist being so implicated in this account of rite.6 The rise of reflexivity in sociology permits theological reflection on what is peculiar in the sociological gaze when applied to issues of edification and enchantment.

In retrospect both studies seem to uncannily mirror the journey of Huysmans from decadence to the seeking of innocence. This involved an escape into hope from despair and a conversion, in his case, that sought but never arrived at a monastic vocation. He settled for an oblate status, but then the liturgical world he loved so much collapsed, leaving him with nothing but God. Like a sociologist, he felt too much of the detail of ecclesial culture for others to understand and that was his theological fate.

The writing of The Enchantment of Sociology emerged from three considerations. Firstly, a realisation that the choirboy, the ideal type of the liturgy book, who exists as much as the individual Calvinist of Weber, grows up. The world of postmodernity outside the stalls seems endlessly corrupting; religion is repeatedly rubbished in the English mass media; and his chances of spiritual survival seem slim. A purpose of the study was to think out his adult vocation, hence the concluding concern with the re-invention of religious orders where charisma could be routinised and made manifest again. In a small way, the study tried to reflect a phrase of St. Augustine, that was applied to von Balthasar, that the entire task in this life "consists in healing the eyes of the heart so they may able to see God." Obviously, the removal of such scales that dim the sight is a spiritual matter, but sociology also has a part, perhaps of amplifying the contingent and drawing attention to what is missing in contemporary culture, what it has wiped out of existence—the young who seek holiness in Catholicism. They do exist, but they have no voice in the mass media or in contemporary cultural images. As the under-represented, they are classical fodder for sociological endorsement. The virtuous are the new deviants of contemporary society, and that is what makes their presence well worthy of sociological scrutiny, whatever about the theological urge to speak on their behalf.

Secondly, as the subtitle of the book suggests, the study sought to supply a sociological reading from within its disciplinary remit of the

relationship between theology and culture. Gaudium et spes exemplified the notion of a theology of good faith arising over bad sociology. This conundrum lay at the heart of the book. As statistics on religious vocations and on sacramental practice fall, matters of central importance to the Church, those in authority cannot but realise the slippage. Clearly, they will resort to cultural assumptions, managerial practices and the social sciences to stem the flow out, as Gaudium et spes envisaged. The issue arises, not over whether modern forms of social thought are used to ameliorate the ebb, but which ones, and how are these to be sociologically understood for their theological purpose? Terms such as community renewal and collaborative ministry seem to owe more to ill-thought out principles of social work than to what sociology might want to say about how to plant faith. There is an authority to these terms theologically appropriated. But they raise uncomfortable issues for a sociologist. Where does the bad faith lie: in the theological uses of sociologically unwarranted assumptions, or in the sociologist's failure to shake off analytical doubt in the interests of what is known as the spirit of Vatican II? These considerations accentuate the outsider status of the Catholic sociologist.

Clearly, he is a small minority in his discipline, but his reflexivity, his sociological awareness, makes him a decided minority in his own faith. The study of enchantment reflected an effort to think through this dilemma. Perhaps, like Huysmans, the sociologist needs a Church that does not exist. Frankly, closet Sarum sociological sympathisers with Benedictine dispositions and Gothic fixations are not numerous, and like other believers, the sociologist has to live with what is on offer, even if it does not seem much at present, hence the striving for theological reconsiderations of culture. The sociologist also has theological imaginings, and the issue of enchantment is a way of thinking these out.

Enunciating an ecclesial opening to the world requires attention to the site, the field, where holy intentions can become wholly mangled in a cultural supermarket where even the sacred can be most profanely commodified. Unless the site is read accurately in terms of context and use, the prospects of unprofitable misreadings are enormous. The problem is that many theologians read the world with hopeful expectation but seldom venture into the untidy arena where holy means are subject to social constructions and reproductions that compete with a myriad of other forms. In venturing to supply theology with its distinctive accounts of culture sociology has to compete with other readings which it regards as myopic in their blindness to sociological considerations. In the rear of one's mind, in this study, was a revolt, which one shares with Martin and many others, against Milbank's treatment of the sociologist as a wandering brickie admitted in charity to re-point bits of the walls of the city of God loosened by the implosive nature of his scholarship.10 Sociology also has holy purposes. Contrary to Martin, it can be an unexpected instrument for policing the sublime and remodelling the field of culture to theological advantage. The notion of a ritual order in Sociology and Liturgy, a point recognised by Nichols, the sole Catholic

recognition the study received, points to some rare sociological scruples in handling the liminal and in protecting the numinous from reductionist imputations.¹¹

Both studies revolt against the tyrannies of textual exegetical readings of Derrida, Foucault and Kristeva so common in academic culture, especially at Cambridge. Any contextualisation that takes into account the praxis of the field, the province of sociological scrutiny, seems ignored in this style of theology that has hijacked the term postmodernity and sociologically misunderstood its basis in culture. It is to obscure what is distinctive about the sociological gaze.

The analytical power of sociology lies in its comparative sweep. Almost anything in culture is now subject to painstaking sociological analysis and its penetration is wide and enormous, except in the area of Catholicism. Thus, body wrestlers, hustlers, prostitutes, therapists and nurses have a sociological voice about how they make sense of their lives. Detail is recorded in qualitative methods to get their lives right. But, curiously, little is known about how liturgical actors, the priests, altar servers and choirboys, make sense of their roles, their transactions with the holy. They exist as pre-reflexive actors, unsullied by sociological attention. If sociology can know so much, what are the dangers it faces that are peculiar to the craft but which bear on theological considerations?

This relates to the third facet of the study, one which all the contributors missed. When drafted initially, the book was to end on what is now chapter 2, "To be or not be: the sociologist's dilemma". But reading Geertz, on the way the anthropologist represented being there in an alien culture, the sense of being a Catholic and a sociologist in a climate of postmodernity needed to be articulated and so the book was recast. But what is so peculiar about this conjunction of piety and analysis? This related to a property of *Sociology and Liturgy*: the dilemma of the sociologist's curiosity. This might seem a ludicrous comment, for is it not the sociologist's task to uncover detail, to leave none unsignified, to betray the secret of all manner of tribes in social constructions and to mark the spirit of calculation that lies behind any cultural arrangement?

This issue of curiosity lay behind the use of the choirboy as the motif of the dangers of innocence and experience, of looking too closely at the liturgical apparatus. This antinomy of the sociological gaze, that sacralises the form, thus rendering the content of grace un-mysterious, was transposed into the endless curiosity a commodified culture invokes in the mass media and in the internet, where almost any image can be constructed and viewed for pleasure without commitment. Benjamin could never have envisaged these possibilities in his notion of the collapse of aura, where distance is tolerated, and all is appropriated to the immediate. In the privatisation of the appreciation of culture, both theology and sociology fear the erosion of the public sphere, the arena of the communal where humanity is forged.

Contrary to Martin, moral theology lies close to the text. It forms a central concern of the notion of secularisation as theft in a culture of postmodernity, where the sacred is misappropriated, de-contextualised

and the Man

and denied the exclusivity of its sacramental setting and the subtleties of discernment which a habitus cultivates. The need to find a rereading, a resistance to this symbolic violence of consumerism that controls the cultural field and the capital so employed there, is a response to the emptiness which Guardini perceived and which von Balthasar tried to resolve. In the market there is a cultural anarchy. No rules of taste govern the making of any image to service the deceits of sexual and cultural politics. Any want, any desire can be actualised in a more advanced replay of Faust's game with Mephistopheles. Such is the spiritual vacuum, that blasphemy is believed to be an artistic right and so the holy wilt and this study asks theology why should they? Perhaps, because it inhabits the spiritual slums of postmodernity, sociology feels what the theologian cannot. If there are terrors to postmodernity, they are symbolised in Benjamin's angel which has become its motif. The properties of the angelic in the choirboy in the first study have been transmogrified into a token of something more dangerous in the second and the call for enchantment is all the more strident. In thinking about itself, sociology faces its own self-deceptions, its own foolishness in relating to God.

In his arguments against the abolition of Christianity, Swift asked "how would the Free-thinkers, the strong Reasoners and the Men of profound Learning be able to find another Subject so calculated in all Points whereon to display their Abilities". Since Swift, sociology has obligingly proffered its services as the other subject. But the definiteness of its deference to reason is now unconvincing and postmodernity marks this season of doubt of a discipline that analyses but never concludes. But as the study suggests, in the context of postmodernity the natural lineage of secularisation in sociology itself is also open to doubts. These doubts make objections to theology less definite. But sociology cannot have its own context-free notion of theology. As a discipline, it is enjoined to come down from the mountain and inspect the wastelands of postmodernity and those who regulate the field. It has to come back to the society it inhabits.

In the study, there is a hostility towards the effortless superiority of Anglicanism which Howes notices. This hostility relates to a sense of nostalgia and loss of birthright that haunts the study, especially surrounding the culture of the Cathedral, the flagships of Anglicans, in which the Catholics, who conceived and built them, are but strangers. It is this estrangement, not Irishness, that makes this sociologist an outsider. The nostalgia felt derives not from the culture of postmodernity but from a sense of dispossession. Issues of cultural and symbolic capital embody principles of power. They naturalise the contours of the field and permit entry on terms that are unapparent.

The use of Bourdieu's sociology of culture in the study has two constituencies: secularisation and Anglicanism. The first concerns the way religious sensibilities have been masked and removed from the cultural field (and could be re-inserted through habitus and sacramental power). The second relates to Anglicanism and its possession of the symbolic and cultural capital of the Cathedral where Catholics are outsiders on their

own history and are denied the means of re-inventing their tradition on the original sites. Anglicanism parades in its antiquarianism its possession of tradition and monopoly of religious deference that satisfies the meagre needs of a civil society rapidly becoming uncivil. Awkward questions are generated for Anglicanism when issues of religious memory are raised, such as in the writings of the French sociologist, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, a point Davie realises in her appreciation of her work.¹³ There is a revisionism surrounding issues of nation and religious affiliation that complements the concerns of this study of enchantment.14 If inculturation is to have value, it has to be given sociological teeth. The trouble with the notion of inculturation is that its use has been confined to Asia and Africa. When it is transposed to Europe, different considerations emerge, of what type of culture and nation is to be represented in Catholicism. History and political circumstance cannot be ignored in accounts of culture, nor can issues of power and control of cultural capital be side-lined. These are questions that implicate sociology in theology, but again of which type and in what relationship?

Martin elegantly captures the limits of the study when he suggests that the most sociologists can do is to rove up to the frontier of theology. But what form of theology is recognised through these peculiar sociological lenses? In a work of 132,000 words, it was not possible to encompass all aspects of theology. Any sociologist dabbling in theology would resist the fate of Mr. Casaubon, of doing so much background reading as to preclude realising a distinctive sociological point. The major theologians Gallagher lists doubtless could be read. Likewise further work could have been done on Lonergan and Rahner, but the difficulty is that their anthropology is cast at too high a level for sociological intervention. Furthermore, some of the theologians listed, such as de Lubac and Gutiérrez, specifically deny any place for sociology in their deliberations about culture. In dealing with the cultural, sociology has to treat issues of effect. A sociologist can gain far more from reading a prophetic account of what might go wrong than a highly cast philosophical treatise on culture and the transcendent that is unaccountable to any conditions of practice. Waugh's predictions about the outcome of Vatican II tell a sociologist more about culture than the insights of Rahner might yield.15 Doubtless Waugh would have gone colic at such a sociological endorsement.

Dealing in postmodernity in both studies involves the use of an apophatic theology. For its own disciplinary reasons, sociology is likely to be strong on the transcendent and weak on the incarnational. von Balthasar has been the main theological influence on these sociological writings since 1984. Of all the major twentieth century theologians, only von Balthasar understood sociology from within its domain assumptions. There is a prescriptive cast to the type of theology sociology can best handle, which this study tentatively explores. Far more work in this area is required.

A crucial area of sociological intervention relates to the context in which theology is formulated¹⁶ and this bears on the contributions of

Gallagher and Howes. This involves treating, with qualification, theology as a form of sociology of knowledge, not in terms of reductionist or relativistic intent, but to draw out the social assumptions that relate to its context of deliberation.

The contextualisation of a theology within a secular university confines its study to matters proper to reason. Issues of faith and spirituality are precluded in terms of practice and accountability, a point which D'Costa has bravely criticised 17. In the U.S.A., this is recognised as a deficiency in academic culture especially in relation to the study of theology. The issue is not only a question of spiritual qualification to the secular academic study of theology, but also, more importantly, of who owns the subject and on what basis is its agenda to be evaluated? Clearly and rightly, Catholicism renders its theologians accountable for misreadings of culture; for instance that lead to erroneous thinking that defends the ordination of women. But English Catholicism has no access to the academic culture that coins such strange ideas from the disparate studies of gender in the secular university. The evaluation of academic ideas is increasingly bureaucratised and subject to monetary value and this has an unfortunate effect of confusing the significant with the insignificant. Thus, Cambridge University has a Centre for Advanced Religious and Theological Studies where a range of issues are given price tags, so that Gender and Religion as a topic is deemed worth raising £250,000 for research. But conspicuous by its absence is any reference to Catholic Studies.¹⁸ Indeed, this absence of Catholic studies within the secular academy in the U.S.A. puzzles Duke University, who are having a seminar on this issue in June 1997. Whereas Muslim and Jewish Studies are recognised as branches of knowledge, Catholicism is not deemed part of the culture of inquiry of the secular university, an ironical exclusion given the symbolic importance attached to Newman's idea of a university. This renders any sociological account of Catholic theology and culture from within the terrain of the English University system both artificial and strange.

The whole study of enchantment is directed against the disinterested study of theology. As the study of sociology requires an interest, so does theology: a faith seeking understanding God and the spiritual obligations this entails. The mutual inculturation, to use Howes' phrase, embodied in the study does have a key in the notion of habitus. Allied to spirituality, it points to how games with holiness might be sociologically understood. Academic theology refuses to play these games and so is doomed to misdescribe its subject-matter. The point of the study was to suggest what sociology might do as fieldwork in theology. The next stage is to get out on the site.

If Gallagher and Martin respond from within the theological ambit of the book, and Howes' intermittent Anglicanism places him on the rim, twixt both disciplines, the reactions of Beckford and Tester come from outside, from the sociological terrain upon which it is cast. Most of Beckford's writings are based on sects, religion and modernisation and more recently on sociological issues of a multi-faith society. His concern

with postmodernity in his contribution slightly overstates its importance in the study. Responding to his climatic sensibilities, his Warwick reading was more soundly based than his Umbrian valley reflections. The Warwick reading captured the enabling use of postmodernity for the study, but the Umbrian one misses the link between secularisation and Bourdieu, that is precisely concerned with inequality and power, but within a field of ecclesial culture Correctly, he suggests that postmodernity facilitates a diversity of responses to religion, in all manner of self-made spiritualities, as Heelas, Mellor and Shilling have explored.¹⁹ But this pluralism exasperates the impotence of sociology in the face of an irresistible diversity, a plenitude of knowing, where the risks of disenchantment seem to exceed the fleeting prospect of enchantment. The religions of the New Age of postmodernity have a familiar ring to sociology, reminding of its effort to found an alternative religion to that of traditional theology. But, in postmodernity, the god of positivism has been dethroned and the new fashion is to pursue the god within the self.20

Worries about a self-inflicted and unintentional dispersal in the past two decades in Catholicism are expressed in the notion of an internal secularisation which Isambert wrote of in France in 1976.21 Loss of faith in traditional religions through secularisation effects the seeking of compensations elsewhere, in cults, sects and new religious movements.22 This relates to a fundamental sociological disagreement with Gallagher. Although not having read Casanova's study, one can say that the whole tenor of his conclusion, that religions that resist modernity go into decline, flies in the face of a consensus in Anglo-American sociology of religion, which argues the reverse. Bruce exemplifies this consensus when he observes that "to extend the slogan popular with liberal clergymen, 'building bridges' to the secular world may simply encourage church members to drive across them and not return".23 Resistance to contemporary culture, definite obligations of practice and authoritative rituals and structures of belief might be anathema to liberal theologians, but they are the ingredients of any sociological response to religions that are deemed "successful".

Tester's long concern with the need for critical sociological responsibilities and moral engagement has been accentuated by the emergence of postmodernity. He has also sought to reconcile the Faustian properties of the discipline with worries about the moral status of the flâneur who patrols in a culture that is increasingly demoralised.²⁴ Drawing from within a sociological tradition, he is equally worried about a culture of moral indifference. Religious pluralism and secularisation, as Berger has long argued, also breed indifference.

In refusing to accept the indifference which Tester notes at the end of his contribution, the sociologist as sociologist can also say "Yes" to God, and the purpose of *The Enchantment of Sociology* is to say so.

Timothy Radcliffe, "Relativizing the Relativizers: a theologian's assessment of the role of sociological explanation of religious phenomena and theology today" in David Martin, John Orme Mills, W.S.F.Pickering, eds., Sociology and Theology: Alliance and Conflict, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980, pp. 161-162. This is an appropriate

- point to warmly thank Fr. John Orme Mills for editing this special issue with great patience and also the contributors for their thoughtful responses.
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