Comment

There is some difficulty in relating the development of a science to national patterns. National patterns undoubtedly influence scientific thinking, particularly in the case of powerful countries. This is, however, much more marked in the case of the exact sciences than in regard to our thinking about Man and Society.

A powerful country can propagandize its sciences and cultural activities better than weaker countries while, obviously, more complex social systems tend to have little interest for the intellectual achievements of more simple societies, although there are compensatory phenomena like the interest in primitive art.

Professor Roucek points out that the growing influence of the U.S. has led to an overly rapid growth of some of the sciences, and he is of the opinion that a considerable amount of "borrowing" has taken place.

He overstresses perhaps the borrowing which took place from Germany and he underrates the influence of other European countries, like France, Italy, England, Austria and others.

The interlinkage of sciences has always taken place, but what one could perhaps object to is that the American sciences have fragmentised the thinking of Europe. European sociology can only be understood as an offshoot of philosophy and under the impact of actual social conditions which strove for different patterns of thinking.

For the European who lives in the United States it is often difficult to recognize an European sociologist in American garb. He often seems to become quite different, and so much is read into him out of the American context that sometimes very little remains of the original.

The cult which has been built up around some European sociologists seems often arbitrary and out of relation to the intellectual status which his writings occupy within the total context of European thinking.

We can now witness the remarkable phenomenon that some European sociologists regain some of their influence via a detour to the United State. There is considerable slavish imitation of American sociology in Europe, and there is an acceptance of empirical American sociology plus some of the American sociology which is American-European, but certainly not truly European.

If sociology is regarded as an empirical science the problem could not really arise. Apparently it is not, or is only partially. If sociology is a cultural science, then there is obviously a cleavage between American and European sociology.

The relationship is, however, mutually constructive: empirical sociology profits from its application in various parts of the world while theoretical sociology depends upon the thinkers who can produce "theories". It matters really little whether they are American or
European. Theory-making is an entirely individual process although it may be more recognized as such by the traditions of Europe than by those of America. In our present time, however, it seems that Europe is not very faithful to its own traditions while individualism in the U.S. is perhaps on the increase.

As conditions in general seem unfavorable for theoretical and philosophic thinking, it is natural that there is a considerable amount of backward-looking, and this automatically leads to European thinking.

The problem which Professor Roucek raises is a very interesting one, but it is more a two-way process, in the eyes of this commentator, than as is presented in his paper.

Bartholomew Landheer, Visit. Prof.
University of Kansas