social compass

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# On the Genesis and Transformations of *Social Compass*

*The author reconstructs the four moments that have constituted* Social Compass*'s history. As the publication of the Dutch Catholic Social-Ecclesiastical Institute, the journal was initially dedicated to the dissemination of a sociography of Catholicism. Then, under the direction of the International Federation of Institutes for Social and Socio-Religious Research,* Social Compass *contributed to the production of a sociology of Catholicism. From here, attached to the Centre of Socio-Religious Research of the Catholic University of Louvain,* Social Compass *emerged as a professional, scholarly journal for the sociology of religion. And, for over a decade now, the journal has been attempting to negotiate the postmodern condition.*

***Key words:*** Social Compass*: genesis, development, history, transformation · sociography of Catholicism · sociology of Catholicism · sociology of the sociology of religion*

*L'auteur retrace les quatre grandes étapes de l'histoire de* Social Compass*. En tant que publication de l'institut néerlandais KASKI (Institut socio-ecclésiastique catholique), la revue était initialement destinée à présenter une sociographie du catholicisme. Ensuite, sous la houlette de FERES (Fédération Internationale des Instituts de Recherches Sociales et Socio-Religieuses),* Social Compass *a contribué à l'émergence d'une sociologie du catholicisme. Rattachée plus tard au Centre de recherches socio-religieuses de l'Université catholique de Louvain, la revue a trouvé ses marques en tant que revue spécialisée en sociologie des religions. Enfin, depuis plus d'une décennie,* Social Compass *tente d'appréhender les conditions postmodernes de la religion.*

***Mots-clés:*** Social Compass*: genèse, développement, histoire, évolution · sociographie du catholicisme · sociologie de la sociologie de la religion· sociologie du catholicisme*

These reflections are an attempt to reconstruct the 50-year history of *Social Compass*. Such an exercise requires that we make a break with that "realism" that the average everyday sociology of religion must labor under if it is to function as a "normal" science. Such an exercise requires that we, sociologists of religion, turn our tools of analysis against ourselves, and, through a destabilizing reflexive gesture, analyze the way our particular discourse on

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the social world has been produced, circulated, consumed, and reproduced. In a word, a reconstruction of the genesis and transformations of *Social Compass* requires that we situate ourselves in the sociology of knowledge and engage in a sociology of the sociology of religion (Houtart, 1990: 36).

As a scientific journal with specific scholarly interests (as detailed in its statements of intent) and a legitimized censorship process (as materialized in its editorial board), *Social Compass* has played an important role in the generation and perpetuation of a distinctive sociology of religion. However, the distinctiveness of this sociology of religion has, in the final analysis, been most determined by the imperatives of the different institutions to which the journal has been attached. We must not forget, moreover, that *Social Compass* has, at the same time, been shaped and constituted by a more global social discourse on religion that can only be properly understood in light of the socio-historical conditions in which it was produced. The development of the distinctive discourse of *Social Compass*, the international European scholarly journal of Catholic origins, needs to be understood in light of those global "paradigm shifts" in social theory in general and the sociology of religion in particular, on the one hand, and those "world-historical" events, on the other. Indeed, a historically-oriented sociology of *Social Compass* must negotiate at least two sets of interrelated dialectics: the dialectic of the "from below" and "from above" and the dialectic of the empirical and the epistemological (Table 1).

Although it would no doubt generate the most comprehensive analysis, we cannot in what follows give equal weight to all the movements of these two dialectics. This is simply not feasible, given the scope of these reflections. We will instead allow our investigations to be guided by the following question: what are the different conceptions of the "sociology of religion" that have undergirded the trajectory of *Social Compass*? This question requires that we give methodological pride of place to the epistemological over the empirical, i.e. that we perform an *epoché* on the empirical problem of the constitution of *Social Compass*'s discourse (or, what amounts to the same thing, that we epistemologically posit the unity of the discourse). It requires that we focus more on the "from above" than the "from below", i.e. that we concern ourselves more with how the global social discourse on religion and its socio-historical conditions have structured *Social Compass* than vice versa. Indeed, this question requires that we side more with Kuhn (1996) and Wallerstein et al. (1996) than with Bourdieu (1984).

**TABLE 1**
**Conceptualizing a historically-oriented sociology of *Social Compass***

| | "From below" | "From above" |
|---|---|---|
| Empirical | Institutional context | "World-historical" events |
| Epistemological | *Social Compass*'s sociology of religion | "Paradigm shifts" |

*Social Compass* has labored under four different conceptions of its discipline—i.e. "sociology"—and of its object of analysis—i.e. "religion". From here stem the four moments that have constituted its history. As the publication of the Dutch Catholic Social-Ecclesiastical Institute, *Social Compass* was initially dedicated to the dissemination of a theoretically restricted *sociography of Catholicism* that, as the handmaiden of Scholasticism, aimed to combat and harness the dialectic of secularization and critique from the "outside" (1953–59). The journal then, under the direction of the International Federation of Institutes for Social and Socio-Religious Research, contributed to the production of an internationally-oriented *sociology of Catholicism*, theoretically dependent on US functional-systems theory, that aimed, not to combat and harness, but rather to understand and negotiate the process of modernization from "within" (1960–67). From here, attached to the Centre of Socio-Religious Research of the Catholic University of Louvain, *Social Compass* "distanced" itself from its confessional origins, achieved theoretical autonomy, and stabilized as a professional, scholarly journal for the *sociology of religion* (1968–88). In these 29 years the journal made significant contributions to the global social discourse on religion. And, for over a decade now, *Social Compass* has, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the emergence of globalization, on the one hand, and the turn to the plurality of particulars, hybridity, and reflexivity, on the other, been attempting to shepherd the sociology of religion through the *postmodern condition* (1989–present). Table 2 summarizes the four moments of the genesis and transformations of *Social Compass* to which we now turn.

## Dissemination of a Sociography of Catholicism (1953–59)

*Social Compass* was founded in 1953 by George Zeegers, director of the Catholic Social-Ecclesiastical Institute (KSKI), the official research organization of the Dutch Catholic Church.

> The Institute was established in the Netherlands in 1946, from a study group which had already been working for some time. It was set up as a centre for research and planning in the social field and its aim was . . . to study religious and social life, with a view to arriving at practical conclusions for use in pastoral care in the social activities among Catholics and in the apostolate among non-Catholics. (Zeegers, 1954/1955: 219)

KSKI was one of the first attempts by the Catholic Church to systematically grapple with the conditions of "modern life":

> The Institute, which owes its existence to the dynamic development of modern life, directs its activities particularly to the future, because it recognizes that this development will have incalculable consequences for the Church. It analysis the social structures, both national and international, and makes a study of the actual and the optimum positions of the Church within the framework of these structures. On this basis the Institute sums up the problems with which Catholics are faced and indicates the systematic means by which the task of the Church can be fulfilled. (Zeegers, 1954/1955: 219)

**TABLE 2**
**Genesis and transformations of *Social Compass***

| Moments | *Social Compass*'s sociology of religion: Characteristics | Institutional contexts | "Paradigm shifts": Social theory | "Paradigm shifts": Sociology of religion | "World-historical" events |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sociography of Catholicism (1953–59) | Handmaiden of Scholasticism; theoretically restricted and practically oriented; description and observation of institutional Church and position of Catholics in society; majority of articles published in Dutch | Catholic Social-Ecclesiastical Institute, The Hague, Netherlands (1953–59) | Merton (1957) | Fichter (1954)<br>Le Bras (1955)<br>Yinger (1957)<br>Goddjin, H. (1958) | "Domino theory" (1954)<br>Warsaw Pact (1955)<br>Cuban Revolution (1959) |
| Sociology of Catholicism (1960–67) | Theoretically dependent on functional-systems theory; conflict between the Dutch idea of the sociology of Catholicism as an "autonomous" nomological science and the French idea of the sociology of Catholicism as a "religious sociology"; articles published in French and English | International Federation of Institutes for Social and Socio-Religious Research, Brussels, Belgium (1960–67) | Goffman (1961)<br>Berger and Luckmann (1966)<br>Garfinkel (1967) | Lenski (1961)<br>Parsons (1962)<br>Bellah (1964)<br>Bellah (1967)<br>Berger (1967)<br>Luckmann (1967) | Non-Aligned Movement (1961)<br>Algerian War ends (1962)<br>Vatican Council II ends (1965) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sociology of religion (1968–88) | Movement away from confessional origins; stabilizes as professional journal; achieves theoretical autonomy; makes substantial contributions to discourse on religion: (a) produces historical-hermeneutic and critically-oriented perspectives that push beyond the nomological conception of the sociology of religion; (b) pursues an international agenda that, by systematically including voices from the South and East, contributes to the expansion of the scope of an object of analysis (i.e. religion) that had been traditionally dominated by the North and West. | Centre of Socio-Religious Research, Catholic University of Louvain, Louvain and Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium (1968–present) | Touraine (1969)<br>Althusser (1970)<br>Foucault (1971)<br>Lévi-Strauss (1971)<br>Godelier (1973)<br>Dussel (1977)<br>Said (1978)<br>Lyotard (1979)<br>Habermas (1981)<br>Luhmann (1985) | Bourdieu (1971)<br>Maduro (1978)<br>Isambert (1983)<br>Stark and Bainbridge (1985) | Student movements (1968)<br>PAV enters Saigon (1975)<br>Nicaraguan and Iranian Revolutions (1979) |
| Negotiating the "postmodern condition" (1989–present) | Conception of the sociology of religion is being transformed as journal negotiates the fusion of global liberal-democratic capitalism and the postmodern turn in the social sciences: (a) shift from the logic of institutional and cultural differentiation to the logic of multiculturalism; (b) shift from the national to the transnational frame of reference; (c) critique of the pretension to universality of modernist perspectives | | Harvey (1989)<br>Jameson (1991)<br>Fukuyama (1992)<br>Žižek (1999)<br>Hardt and Negri (2000) | Beckford (1989)<br>Hervieu-Léger (1993)<br>Parker Gumucio (1993)<br>Robertson (1994) | Fall of Berlin Wall (1989)<br>Treaty of Maastricht (1992)<br>NAFTA (1994)<br>WTO (1995)<br>September 11th (2001)<br>Euro put into circulation (2002)<br>US invades Iraq (2003) |

While under the direction of the KSKI, *Social Compass* was dedicated to the dissemination of a Catholic social-ecclesiastical science. This science had a practical interest. Its aim was "to serve Ecclesiastical authorities by enabling them to base their policy as far as possible on an exact knowledge of the social situation to which that policy refers" (Zeegers, 1954/1955: 219). A handmaiden of Neo-Scholasticism, *Social Compass*'s social-ecclesiastical science was theoretically limited to sociographical description and observation of the institutionalized Catholic Church. This social-ecclesiastical science was a sociography of Catholicism. Caught between theology and sociology, the journal found itself at the epistemological crossroads. This unique situation is exemplified by Zeegers' reflections on what would become one of the central concerns of the KSKI, namely the world population problem:

> The Catholic social scientist will be inclined, by reason of his religious and moral convictions, to consider the increase of the world population as a fact that puts before mankind difficult but not insoluble problems. The Catholic is convinced that creation originates in God. This conviction implies, moreover, that man, by meditation on this order of creation can not only obtain a knowledge of the Uncreated Origin, but also and through it an insight in the finality of the order of creation: the norm for the natural human behavior. From this fundamental thought the world population problem presents itself to the Catholic social scientist as a problem of the human race and its unique development in the cosmos; here the whole hierarchy and all aims of creation have come into the problem. Out of this synthetic basic attitude which guarantees an objective perception of the phenomena in their totality, the scientific isolation of the phenomena or even of their special aspects can be realized without losing the overall view on the connection of the phenomena. A deeper knowledge of the principles of the order of creation enriches the knowledge of this order, but the final meaning of the parts can only be understood in its eternity. (Zeegers, 1956/1957: 198)

*Social Compass*'s sociography of Catholicism was thus a moment of Transcendental Thomism. But, in order to understand this unique situation in which the nascent journal found itself, we must be willing to break with the scientistic consciousness. We must be willing to approach the genesis of *Social Compass* from the point of view, not of critique, but of Scholasticism; from the point of view, not of secularization, but of Protestantism. Indeed, the history of *Social Compass* is testimony to the fact that denominational distinctions have been epistemologically relevant in the development of the sociology of religion.

The denominational distinction between Protestant and Catholic theology can be understood, from a historically oriented epistemological perspective, as the tension between theology as a positive science and theology as a speculative science, between the historical interpretation of the Christian life and Neo-Scholasticism. While both modern Protestant and Catholic theologies emerged in and through the coming-to-terms with the Kantian inversion, and while their first expressions were situated within the limits of the transcendental consciousness, Protestant theology came to terms with Kant through the Neo-Kantian problem of history (Schleiermacher, 1994), and Catholicism came to terms with Kant through the Fichteian radicalization of transcendental idealism (Maréchal, 1947). From these different world-

views stem the different Protestant and Catholic positions vis-à-vis the human-social sciences.

Protestantism emerged in and through the dialectic of secularization and critique, in and through the dialectic of the rationalization of "this world" and the rise of modern thought. Protestantism generated and was generated by the differentiation of society, the "polytheism" of values, "denominational pluralism". As the socio-historical interpretation of the Christian life, liberal Protestant theology had affinities with the development of the sociology of religion; for the science of society too was grounded in the process of modernization. Sociology thus constituted an "internal" epistemological problematic for Protestant theology that dates back to the Neo-Kantianism of the 19th century: Protestant theology had to go through the sociology of religion as one of the moments of the critique of historical reason (Troeltsch, 1996).

Roman Catholicism, at home in the positivity of the infinite, would have no choice but to come to terms with the protest against onto-theology, the Kantian inversion, and the horizon of history, i.e. it would have no choice but to come to terms with the dialectic of critique and secularization. The attempt to negotiate this dialectic is precisely the Neo-Scholasticism of, for example, Maréchal (1947), Rahner (1994), Maritain (1984), and de Lubac (1965). But Roman Catholicism would remain "Catholic" through its defensive posture vis-à-vis the differentiation of society, the "polytheism" of values, "denominational pluralism", and the critique of socio-historical reason. Indeed, Roman Catholicism would remain "Catholic" through its defensive posture vis-à-vis the process of modernization. As part of its general hostility regarding the basic coordinates of modernity, Neo-Scholasticism would repudiate the sociology of religion for its metaphysical implications (namely, positivism). It was only after the Second World War that Catholic theology would cautiously "gesture" towards the sociology of religion. But, even then, the sociology of religion constituted an "external" epistemological problem for Neo-Scholasticism: that is, the problem of pastoral theology's sociographical restriction of the sociology of religion, i.e. the problem of a sociography of Catholicism.

This is thus the complicated intellectual context in which *Social Compass* emerged: the journal was, on the one hand, one of the first attempts by Scholasticism to grapple with the social sciences. In this sense, it was a watershed. But, on the other, *Social Compass*'s Catholic roots prevented it from developing a more sophisticated theoretical apparatus, and, specifically, a "full-fledged" sociology of religion. In this sense *Social Compass* lagged behind those other initiatives to develop and institutionalize what at the time was a relatively new intellectual field. The most fruitful initiatives were, of course, being produced in the largest Protestant country, the United States.

The articles published by *Social Compass* during its first seven years dealt with two issues that reflected the two primary concerns of the KSKI. On the one hand, the journal engaged the problem of the relationship between the institutional Church and society. Toward this end it produced technical reports on the demographics of parishes, studies on the efficacy of pastoral

care, and analyses of religious vocations. On the other, the journal dealt with the problem of the social position of Catholics, that is, their position among, for example, the occupational classes, graduates, and the like. These two issues interlocked at that problem that grounded the overall trajectory of the KSKI, and thus of *Social Compass*: namely, the problem of the "adjustment" of the institutional "apparatus" of the Church to the modern world:

> The immediate starting point for these studies is to be found . . . in those projects for social development (industrialization, plans for agricultural development, emigration or immigration) which have a bearing on the social position of Catholic groups and demand a dynamic adjustment of the whole Catholic apparatus. The drawing up of demographic and socio-economic "prognoses" forms the basis of the whole field of this research. (Zeegers, 1954/1955: 219–220)

But perhaps most significant for *Social Compass*'s future development, for its future contribution to the global social discourse on religion, was the international perspective it developed during these first years. Driven by the international imperatives of the KSKI, this perspective aimed to provide "social-scientific assistance in regions in which Catholics [were] in difficult circumstances" (Zeegers, 1954/1955: 220). Three regions were of concern: Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the so-called "Mission areas".

The journal produced studies on the plight of Catholic refugees in Germany and Austria—and in particular the German diaspora—caused by the two world wars. The interest in Eastern Europe was of a different nature: namely, to prepare the Church for the changes that had transpired with the rise of Marxist–Leninism: "When the historic moment arrives, in which the peoples of East Europe can once more control their own fate, the Church must be prepared to assume again its thousands-year-old function as guarantor of a social and cultural balance" (Zeegers, 1954/1955: 221).

The sociography of Catholicism of the Mission areas aimed to provide social-scientific information

> which could serve as a foundation for the work of the apostolate in a rapidly changing society, for the creation of new forms of social apostolate in the spirit of the latest Encyclical on the Missions and for the organization of new forms of assistance for the Church in the West. (Zeegers, 1954/1955: 221)

But this interest in the Mission areas cannot be separated from the geopolitics of the Cold War. Reflecting on KSKI's most important Mission area—i.e. Africa—Zeegers would claim: "This rapidly developing continent will have to decide within the next future whether it will join in the Una Sancta or whether its proletariat, millions strong, is to descend to the level of an anti-religious humanism, which easily leads to communism" (Zeegers, 1954/1955: 221).

## The Production of a Sociology of Catholicism (1960–67)

The development of a Neo-Scholasticism more able and willing to come to terms with secularization and critique, on the one hand, and the expansion

of the social sciences, on the other, would bring forth the limits of the idea of a theoretically restricted religious sociography with practical ends that characterized those early years of *Social Compass* when it was under the direction of the KSKI. In 1960 the journal was taken over by the International Federation of Institutes for Social and Socio-Religious Research (FERES). This change in institutional context was accompanied by an intellectual reorientation: sociographical description and observation of the institutionalized Catholic Church gave way to sociological interpretation and explication of the Catholic Church as social system. In an attempt to push beyond an anachronistic religious sociography, *Social Compass* began to dedicate itself to the production of a sociology of Catholicism. This new orientation which characterized the second moment of *Social Compass*'s trajectory was made explicit in that Editorial note that launched the first issue published under the direction of FERES:

> Le but de cette revue catholique consacrée aux études socio-religieuses est double: faciliter l'utilisation des méthodes sociologiques dans la pensée et l'action des chrétiens et apporter en sociologie la contribution des catholiques dans un domaine qui leur est propre: la sociologie de l'Eglise catholique. (Editors, 1960: 5)

The Scholastic aversion to social theory that had characterized *Social Compass*'s early years and had prevented the development of a "Catholic sociology" slowly faded. This was the result of the Catholic Church's opening up to the world, of its interest in "the signs of the time" that would crystallize with the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) in general, and *Gaudium et Spes* (i.e. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) in particular. The Catholic social scientist could, in light of this context, more convincingly argue that sociological analysis did not necessarily imply the acceptance of metaphysical positivism, and specifically the reduction of religion to a social function. For "religion has two poles: God and the human being. The sociology concerns itself with the first, with the study of the social dimensions of the human being" (Houtart, 1960: 21).

Neo-Scholasticism no longer attempted to praxeologically combat and harness secularization and critique with the help of a religious sociography. Instead, it attempted to theoretically understand, for example, the problems of social change, the urban parish, and "de-Christianization". But such a task required the grounding of a Catholic social "science". As the newly structured *Review of Socio-Religious Studies*, *Social Compass* contributed to this task, calling for the development of a sociology of Catholicism that could enrich pastoral action. That Editorial note we have already alluded to would state:

> Les initiateurs de cette nouvelle formule de la revue . . . désirent mettre l'accent sur l'aspect scientifique des travaux. Est-ce à dire que leur intérêt pastoral soit mis en question? Il n'en est rien. La revue publiera de nombreux articles concernant des expériences pastorales ou même des études faites en vue de la pastorale. Elle désire cependant montrer combien les recherches menées au départ d'hypothèses sociologiques sont riches en enseignement pour l'action. (Editors, 1960: 5)

In search of theoretical foundations for the sociology of Catholicism, the editors of *Social Compass* turned towards the USA. This is not surprising given the fact that in the post-war era the United States led the production of both social theory and the sociology of religion because of the influence of the USA in Europe since the Marshall Plan, as well as its overall geo-political significance during the Cold War. Indeed, given the international division of intellectual labor and socio-historical conditions, it is not surprising that *Social Compass*'s sociology of Catholicism would be grounded in that theoretical perspective that dominated in the United States, namely functional-systems theory. During these years, the names of Parsons (1962), Merton (1957), and Yinger (1957) were the most often cited by contributors such as Tufari (1960), Houtart (1960), the brothers Goddijn (1964), Birou (1960), and Fichter (1960). At that time *Social Compass*'s theoretical agenda was set by functional-systems theory. There were two primary concerns: (a) the problem of the application of the idea of social function to religion; and (b) the problem of the integrationist function of the Catholic Church in light of industrialization, urbanization, and the like. Eventually, the question of social change would be addressed by authors such as Maître (1960), Thurlings (1961), and Aquaviva (1963). But this concern for social change needs to be understood in light of the movement of theoretical production in the United States, and specifically the attempt to push beyond the static nature of the functional-systems paradigm (Bellah, 1964).

*Social Compass*'s theoretical dependence on functional-systems theory was problematic, however, for it implied the appropriation of a theoretical tradition foreign to the intellectual and socio-historical conditions of European Catholicism. Functional-systems theory, we may recall, was an attempt to develop a social theory more suited to the unique socio-historical conditions of the United States, more suited to that unique manifestation of individualism and the "polytheism of values" that has been described as the "American Way of Life" (de Tocqueville, 1961; Baudrillard, 1986). In the sociology of religion, functional-systems theory provided the framework for an understanding of religion, on the one hand, as a carrier of certain political liberal values which function as a vehicle for social integration and maintenance, and, on the other, as a bulwark against the destructive forces of pernicious individualism. Parsons's (1962) idea of "denominational pluralism" as the turning-on-its-head of Troeltschian pessimism and H.R. Niebuhr's (1987) studies on the sources of denominationalism exemplify this perspective which, in the end, was an attempt to come to terms with US Protestantism. But the illusion of "objectivity" lurking behind the nomological frame of reference that grounded functional-systems theory and ruled the day would keep beneath the surface the epistemological difficulties associated with the problem of transplanting this Anglo-American paradigm in Europe.

The problem of *Social Compass*'s theoretical dependence on functional-systems theory would manifest itself as the tension between the Dutch idea of the sociology of Catholicism as an "autonomous" nomological science at the "service" of theology, on the one hand, and the French idea of the sociology of Catholicism as a "sacred science", as a "religious sociology", on the other. This tension was a symptom of *Social Compass*'s theoretical

immaturity. It emerged in and through the attempt to negotiate the demands of the Anglo-American functional-systems theory many sociologists of Catholicism turned towards and the demands of the European Neo-Scholasticism to which all sociologists of Catholicism were still subordinate. The journal would have to work through this tension before it could achieve theoretical autonomy.

The Dutch sociology of Catholicism was no doubt shaped by the personal initiative of Zeegers. But it also corresponded to the social situation of the Dutch Church after the Second World War. Indeed, Houtart has suggested that:

> la sociologie néerlandaise du catholicisme était caractérisée par une préoccupation de gestion institutionnelle religieuse. Sans doute, était-ce dû en partie à la formation personnelle du professeur Zeegers, mais cela correspondait également à la situation du catholicisme dans la société néerlandaise d'après-guerre. Les catholiques y prenaient en effet une part de plus en plus importante, aussi bien démographiquement que politiquement et l'importance des institutions dans la vie collective de la société civile néerlandaise était prépondérante. L'initiative prise par le professeur Zeegers correspondait donc à la fois à la position de l'Eglise dans la société des Pays-Bas et à la conscience qu'en avaient les autorités ecclésiastiques. La tendance quelque peu technocrate que revêtaient les recherches ne pouvait que renforcer un caractère de confessionnalité, exigé par la pilarisation de l'espace social néerlandais. (1990: 36)

This affinity between the institutional concerns of the Dutch ecclesial authorities and the "vertical pluralism" ("Versäulung") that characterized Dutch society generated, on the one hand, the theoretical problem of institutional differentiation, and, on the other, a strict logico-methodological division of labor between sociology and theology. These are the two pillars upon which stands the idea of a sociology of Catholicism as an "autonomous" nomological science at the "service" of theology. The concern with the problem of institutional differentiation explains the popularity of functional-systems theory among Dutch sociologists of religion as the aim of this theoretical perspective was precisely to analyze the differentiation and integration of systems of social action. The structural similarities between religion and society that existed between the Netherlands and the United States could only further legitimate the Dutch turn towards this Anglo-American social-theoretical paradigm (Kruijt and Goddijn, 1962; Moberg, 1962).

With Mannheim (1936), moreover, we can see how the strict disciplinary differentiation between sociology and theology that defined the Dutch sociology of Catholicism corresponded to, and was reinforced by, the social logic of vertical pluralism. But functional-systems theory also reinforced this division of intellectual labor to the extent that it restricted the sociology of Catholicism to a nomological science that had no business with theological interpretation and pastoral action: "[O]nly the pure, i.e., the secular scientific character of sociology of religion, will guarantee the best help to those engaged in pastoral work, if it be understood that sociological insights must be interpreted theologically" (Schillebeeckx, 1963: 261; see also Goddijn, 1958/1959).

The French sociology of Catholicism by contrast concerned itself more with the problem of cultural coherence and change than institutional differentiation and stability; and it found alien the strict division of labor between sociology and theology, explanation and interpretation, theory and practice (Le Bras, 1959). This difference no doubt stemmed from the fact that the social situation of the French Catholic Church after the Second World War was characterized more by the problem of laicization and the movement of Catholic action than the problem of vertical pluralism (Hervieu-Léger, 1998). Houtart has described this relationship between the French sociology of Catholicism and the situation of the French Catholic Church thus:

> La sociologie religieuse [française] était l'aboutissement du "Voir, Juger, Agir", de l'Action Catholique spécialisée et avait été particulièrement inspirée dans ses démarches par le fameux ouvrage: "France, pays de mission". L'idée était que pour pouvoir évangéliser, pa le fallait connaître la réalité de la société. Il en résulta un accent beaucoup plus fort mis sur le rapport entre classes sociales et comportements religieux . . . La situation de l'Eglise dans les sociétés latines influençait évidemment ce type de préoccupation. Il ne s'agissait pas, comme dans la société néerlandaise, de renforcer un pouvoir institutionnel au sein de la société civile, mais plutôt de sortir des préoccupations strictement institutionnelles, pour rencontrer un monde et une culture devenue étrangère aux perspectives chrétiennes. (1990: 37)

The concern for culture, change, and the interrelationship between theory and practice no doubt corresponded to the situation of the Catholic Church in France. But the particularity of the French sociology of Catholicism was also shaped by the intellectual tradition of this country: Blondel (1995), Bergson (1970), Maritain (1984), and Teilhard de Chardin (1955)—an important strand of French thought found it difficult to separate consciousness and its objectifications, the discipline and its object of analysis, thought and action. It concerned itself, moreover, with the problem of change, movement, the dynamism of life, and attempted to reflectively grasp thought as part of this problem.

Situated within this tradition, the French sociology of Catholicism would develop a historically-oriented perspective that would aim to grasp the development of its object of analysis (Leclercq, 1963). This perspective would destabilize the nomological idea of "secularization" or "de-Christianization" by bringing forth the continuity between the sacred and the secular, theology and sociology (Le Bras, 1963). Indeed, the French sociology of Catholicism would attempt to break with that division of labor between the priest and the professor by grasping the problem of a religious sociology as the latest moment in the development of the sacred sciences. In the same way that for the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages philosophy and theology intersected at that point where metaphysics and natural theology interlocked as the ontological and/or cosmological arguments, for the Neo-Scholasticism of the post-war era, sociology and theology intersected at that point where pastoral sociology and practical theology interlocked as the dialectic of secularization and critique (Labbens, 1960).

As the 1960s advanced, the contributors to *Social Compass* tended to grant more and more normative leverage to the Dutch conception of the sociology of Catholicism as a nomological science. The French religious sociology, by

contrast, was perceived as "confessional", as less legitimate (van Hooijdonk, 1961). This was no doubt a reflection of the positivism that ruled the day.

These years were also marked by an expansion and deepening of the journal's international perspective. This was no doubt in part a reflection of the change in the journal's institutional context, and in part a reflection of the change in its intellectual orientation. On the one hand, the journal's transfer from the KSKI to FERES generated an expansion in its international perspective to the extent that this transfer implied a shift from the logic of a Dutch institute with an international component to the logic of an international organization modeled in the spirit of an internationally-oriented Catholic Action. And, on the other hand, the shift from a sociography of Catholicism to a sociology of Catholicism deepened *Social Compass*'s international perspective to the extent that the elucidation of a Catholic social science implied a better theoretical understanding of the transnational dimensions of the Catholic Church. Indeed, that Editorial note we have already alluded to that launched *Social Compass*'s first issue under the direction of FERES made clear that an international perspective was to be a central concern of the journal: "La Revue des Etudes socio-religieuses est aussi internationale. Tant parmi les membres du Conseil scientifique que parmi les collaborateures, les deux Amériques, l'Afrique et l'Asie sont représentées" (Editors, 1960: 5).

Most notable was the decision to begin publishing the journal in French and English as well as the emergence of articles from the periphery, Latin America in particular. These articles, however, were marked by a theoretical underdevelopment—or should we say dependency—that reflected the geo-political conditions of the times. Indeed, the majority of these studies were restricted to a sociography of Catholicism reminiscent of *Social Compass*'s intellectual production during the 1950s.

## The Development of a Sociology of Religion (1968–88)

The sway of the positivistic world-view manifested itself in *Social Compass* as the Dutch conception of the sociology of Catholicism, as that strict division of labor between sociology and theology, between explanation and interpretation, between the brothers Goddijn and Schillebeeckx. Given the intellectual climate of the times, one would have thought that *Social Compass*'s third phase would take form in and through the radicalization of this conception of the sociology of Catholicism. One would also have thought that the relocation of the journal to the Centre of Socio-Religious Research of the Catholic University of Louvain in 1968 and its reorientation from a "confessional" sociology of Catholicism to a "professional" sociology of religion would take form in and through the radicalization of the idea of sociology as an "objective" science of explanation. But, as intuitive as it may seem, this interpretation does not get to the heart of the matter. In fact, the so-called "secularization" of *Social Compass* took form in and through the destabilization of the idea of a nomological sociology and the break with

functional-systems theory. Through this destabilization and break the journal would, for the first time, achieve a theoretical autonomy that would provide the conditions suited to the production of a distinctive sociology of religion.

The destabilization of the nomological conception of the sociology of religion and the break with functional-systems theory were generated in and through the development of two different perspectives: a historical-hermeneutic perspective, on the one hand, and a critically-oriented perspective, on the other. These two perspectives which I borrow from the early Habermas (1972) would, over time, be elaborated and nuanced through a "rediscovery" of different strands of the continental philosophical tradition, in particular, French structuralism and German critical theory. This process of "rediscovery" would take *Social Compass*'s understanding of the sociology of religion beyond the limits, not only of the positivism that grounded functional-systems theory, but also beyond the limits of the pragmatism that grounded that other Anglo-American social theoretical paradigm that had come to dominate during the post-war era: namely the symbolic interactionism of the Chicago School (Park and Burgess, 1921; Blumer, 1969; Coulon, 1997).

The historical-hermeneutic approach to the sociology of religion was developed in that space opened up by that paradigm shift generated by Berger and Luckmann's (1966) phenomenological approach to the sociology of religion. We may recall that, situating themselves in that historical-hermeneutic tradition that can be traced through Schutz's (1967) critique of Parsons back to Dilthey's *Geisteswissenschaften* (1989), these two theorists shifted the general orientation of sociology from the problem of the explanation of social action to the problem of the interpretation of the meaning of world-construction. With this shift the sociology of religion moved from the margins of social theory to the center, for religion played a central role in legitimating world-construction.

Drawing on Berger and Luckmann, in 1966 Remy would adumbrate *Social Compass*'s break with functional-systems theory by bringing forth the problem of the reduction of the sociology of religion to the instrumental ends of Neo-Scholasticism:

> En outre, comme on le verra, nous nous sommes efforcés de ne pas prendre le point de vue des membres du corps ecclésiastique. Comme le disent Berger et Luckmann, il est important que la sociologie religieuse ne soit pas pensée exclusivement ou même de façon prioritaire en prenant comme point de référence les préoccupations du "manager". (Remy, 1966: 40)

But Remy, together with Hambye, would systematize this historical-hermeneutic perspective in two key articles published in 1969. Reworking Le Bras's sociology of religion in light of the structuralist anthropology and semiology, Remy and Hambye would bring forth the problem of the phenomenological transmission of religious experience. This problem would take issue with the dominant nomological accounts of secularization, and it would also undercut theology's hegemony on interpretation.

Thus emerged the idea of the sociology of religion as a theory of knowledge. From this historical-hermeneutic space have stemmed several initiatives that have contributed to the distinctiveness of *Social Compass*'s sociology of religion. We will mention three: (a) Estruch's idea of religious innovation (1972); (b) Isambert's analysis of popular religion (1975); and, (c) of course, Lalive d'Epinay's reflections on the everyday (1981).

The critically-oriented approach to the sociology of religion would also take issue with the objectivist illusion of an empiricism that reduced reality to the technical exploitability of religious phenomena. But, unlike the historical-hermeneutic approach which destabilized the nomological conception of the sociology of religion by bringing forth the problem of religion as a common cultural tradition that is always already there, the critically oriented approach would bring about this destabilization by bringing forth the problem of religion as the manifestation of ideological relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed (Habermas, 1972). This perspective can be traced back to Marx's critique of political economy (1975). But it was made possible by the structuralism of Althusser (1970) and Godelier (1973), and the theory of practice of Bourdieu (1971).

With his concern for the problem of system disintegration and the phenomenon of dysfunctionality, in 1960 Houtart would foreshadow this critically oriented approach (1960: 38). It would not be until the 1970s, however, that Houtart, together with Lemercinier, would lay the foundations for this approach through the publication of studies such as "Weberian Theory and the Ideological Function of Religion" (1976), "Religion et mode de production tributaire" (1977), and "Religion et mode de production lignager" (1979).

From this critically-oriented space have stemmed important contributions to *Social Compass*'s sociology of religion. We will mention three: (a) Maduro's reflections on religion and social conflict (1978); (b) Nesti's studies on religion and the working class (1980); and (c) Parker Gumucio's studies on popular religion (1986).

During the 1970s and 1980s *Social Compass* pursued an international agenda that, by systematically including voices from the underdeveloped South and the Communist and non-Christian East, contributed to the expansion of the scope of an object of analysis (i.e. religion) and to the development of a tool of analysis (i.e. sociology) that had traditionally been dominated by the industrialized North and the Christian West. During these decades the journal, for example, dedicated issues to religion in Poland, Latin America, Africa, Japan, India, Sri Lanka, the Korean Peninsula, and Indonesia.

However, *Social Compass*'s intellectual division of labor was still plagued by that asymmetry of the 1960s under a new guise: the asymmetry between the sociology of Catholicism of the center and the sociography of Catholicism of the periphery had become an asymmetry between the theoretical production of the center, and the application of this theory—in the form of ethnographically-oriented studies—in the periphery. There was perhaps one exception to this general trend—Latin America.

## Negotiating the Postmodern Condition (1989–Present)

For over a decade now, *Social Compass* has been attempting to negotiate the *postmodern condition*. But what exactly is this condition? The postmodern condition is a *historical* condition. Postmodernism is not simply a style of thought which is skeptical of "grand narratives". It does not simply refer to that way of seeing the world that gravitates around the plurality of particulars, alterity, difference, fluidity, hybridity, and reflexivity. Postmodernism is first and foremost a cultural form that is related to the "rise of more flexible modes of capital accumulation, and a new round of 'time–space compression' in the organization of capitalism" (Harvey, 1998: vii). While postmodernism, the cultural form, can be traced to the passage from industrial to postindustrial societies, on the one hand, and the passage from colonial to postcolonial societies, on the other, postmodernism, the style of thought, can be traced to the "linguistic-turn" and the problem of "reflexivity".

Years ago Alain Touraine (1969) and Daniel Bell (1973) wrote definitive works on what at the time were the newly emerging post-industrial societies. More recently, David Harvey has characterized the passage from industrial to post-industrial societies as a shift from "Fordist modernity" to "flexible postmodernism": Fordist modernity is characterized by relative fixity and permanence—fixed capital in mass production, stable, standardized, and homogeneous markets, a fixed configuration of political-economic influence and power, easily identifiable authority and meta-theories, secure grounding in materiality and technical-scientific rationality, and the like, while post-industrial flexibility is "dominated by fiction, fantasy, the immaterial (particularly of money), fictitious capital, images, ephemerality, chance, and flexibility in production techniques, labour markets and consumption niches" (Harvey, 1998: 338–339). But it is Jean-François Lyotard who is perhaps of greatest interest to us here for he more than anyone else has shown how the technological transformations that have undergirded the passage to post-industrial societies have impacted the nature of knowledge. Indeed, the leading sciences and technologies in post-industrial societies have to do with language. This state of affairs, Lyotard argues, has led to an increase in the quantity and intensity of "language games", which in turn has eroded the legitimacy of meta-narratives (1979).

While the passage from industrial to post-industrial societies describes the emergence of the postmodern cultural form in the most advanced and industrialized societies of the center (e.g. Western Europe, Japan, and the United States), in the periphery it is by contrast the passage from colonial to post-colonial societies that describes the emergence of this cultural form. The first studies of the problem of postcolonial societies were developed by the sociology of underdevelopment and dependency theory. Over time, with the emergence of more nuanced postcolonial perspectives the problem of the "Third World" gave way to the problem of the "subaltern", the problem of "dependency" gave way to the problem of "Orientalism" (Said, 1978). Indeed, Homi Bhabha writes:

> Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of "minorities" within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples. (1994: 171; see also Spivak, 1988)

Today, however, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the latest stages of European integration (i.e. the Treaty of Maastricht and the circulation of the Euro), and the emergence of, for example, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the idea of a "free trade area for the Americas", the World Social Forum, and, most recently, the global "war on terrorism", both post-industrial and postcolonial societies are merging in and through the international division of labor of global liberal-democratic capitalism (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Žižek, 2000). As the latest moment of the postmodern condition, liberal-democratic multiculturalism (i.e. "identity politics") and "deterritorialized" (i.e. global), advanced capitalism presents itself as the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992).

In the social sciences, the postmodern way of seeing the world—the intellectual moment of the postmodern condition—has taken form in and through the linguistic turn and the problem of reflexivity. By "linguistic turn" we mean a paradigm shift that grants language primordial ontological status—in a word, that, whether we like or not, we are all dependent on language, we are all constituted in and through language: for example, culture and the unconscious function like languages; society is grounded in communication, in language games; religious traditions are linguistically transmitted, that is they are transmitted as languages, and the like. The turn to language epistemologically and methodologically implies a turn to the plurality of particulars. This turn emerges as an attempt to come to terms with the socio-historical logic of multiculturalism, but it is also driven by and perpetuates this logic. The linguistic-turn in the social sciences has three sources: (a) the German historical-hermeneutic tradition (Habermas, 1984–1987)(b) the French structuralist (Lévi-Strauss, 1958) and post-structuralist traditions (Derrida, 1967); and (c) the Anglo-American neo-pragmatist tradition (Rorty, 1982).

By the problem of reflexivity we mean two things. We mean first of all the problem of the self-constitution of society and epistemic re-doubling, the problem of auto-poiesis and theoretical self-referentiality. This problem emerges in and through "time–space compression", in and through globalization. But by the problem of reflexivity we also mean the problem of reflecting on the socio-historical and intellectual conditions of possibility of the "scholarly point of view", that is the problem of the construction of the object of analysis. This problem emerges in and through the decentering of the knowing subject, in and through the problem of the postcolonial "subaltern". While reflexivity in the first sense is a radicalization of functional-systems theory (Luhmann, 1995), reflexivity in the second sense is a radicalization of the Marxian theory of knowledge, the attempt to replace epistemology with a critically-oriented sociology of scholarly knowledge (Bourdieu, 1997).

Through the turn to language and the problem of reflexivity, postmodern social sciences destabilize those socio-theoretical "grand narratives" that have grounded modernist social theories. They undercut the validity of, for example, "secularization", the logics of institutional and cultural differentiation and integration, and cognitive models of social action.

So how is *Social Compass*'s conception of the sociology of religion being transformed as it attempts to negotiate the fusion of liberal-democratic multiculturalism and deterritorialized, advanced capitalism, on the one hand, and the linguistic turn and reflexivity in the social sciences, on the other? The journal's conception of the sociology of religion is being transformed in three ways as it attempts to negotiate this historical condition called "postmodernity".

First, *Social Compass*'s sociology of religion is being transformed in and through a shift from the logic of institutional and cultural differentiation to the logic of multiculturalism. The work of Rex (1994), Hervieu-Léger (1998), and Bastenier (1998, 2000) exemplifies this shift. These authors have attempted to come to terms with the problem of, not the modernist "polytheism of values", the problem of social differentiation, but rather the problem of the plurality of particular religious traditions, the problem of the communication or clash of lifeworlds in a multicultural society.

Second, the journal's sociology of religion is being transformed in and through the shift from the national to the transnational frame of reference. Theorists are calling for a recasting of classical theories of religion that can push beyond the limited logic of the nation-state and thus more adequately address the problem of increasingly globalized religious phenomena. The recent contributions of Davie (1994), Robertson (1994), and Beyer (1998) exemplify this shift.

And third, *Social Compass*'s sociology of religion is being transformed in and through the unmasking of the phallocentric, logocentric, and ethnocentric foundations of modernist theories of religion. Feminist approaches to the sociology of religion (Wallace, 1996), reflections on non-verbal (Nesti, 1995a, 1995b) and New Age forms of religion (Van Hove, 1999; Kubiak, 1999), and the emergence of an increasingly autonomous space of theoretical production in Latin America (Parker Gumucio, 1996, 1998) have contributed to the critique of the pretension to universality of the European or North American Christian male sociologist of religion.

In the next 50 years *Social Compass*'s conception of the sociology of religion will no doubt be shaped by these three interrelated factors: multiculturalism, globalization, and the decentering of theoretical production.

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