

BOOK REVIEW

S C W DUVENAGE, *DIE OPSTANDIGE STUDENT. PRO REGE PERS* BPK 1973. 344 PP WITH A COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF 12 P

This extensive literature study represents a third doctoral thesis by the author and aims at an analysis and critical evaluation of the phenomenon of youth dissent en student rebellion in the U S A.

In order to escape the inevitable one-sided approach of many authors who publish about this theme, the author's goal is an approach in which it would be possible to view the subject in its complexity from as many viewpoints as possible. With this goal in mind he chose the paedagogical sociology as scientific discipline in order to build up an inclusive and comprehensive total view of the phenomena in question. This choice is motivated by stating that this discipline, far more than any other social science, would facilitate such a total view of human society. In this respect Duvenage uncritically associates his scientific position with the "Wysbegeerte der Wetsidee" or philosophy of the cosmonomic idea of Herman Dooyeweerd and makes use of Dooyeweerd's distinction between a positive and philosophical sociology. In Dooyeweerd's conception it is possible to study phenomena empirically, by means of the positive sociology and to approach the same phenomena from a more philosophical point of view by making use of the transcendental-critical method in which the structures of reality and the normative aspects of a problem are focused upon.

The book is composed of three sections: In the first section the results of an intensive literature study, interviews, and other empirical evidence is integrated in order to give the reader a general view of the problem of student radicalism and a perspective of the background factors, grievances and conflicts which instigated the student unrest in the U S A.

In the second main part of this work a structural analysis of the university is done and attention is given to the place of the student within the university. In this section Duvenage makes use of the methods of philosophical sociology as formulated by Herman Dooyeweerd.

The third part discusses the religious motives of the student rebellion on the one hand and the religious motives of the "establishment" against which the student is in rebellion on the other hand. In this section, which functions as an evaluation, Duvenage also gives attention to a "third" alternative for the dialectical solutions, which modern society and the students themselves pose to the problems of the university within the framework of modern technological society.

It is impossible to give an impression of the vast field which this very competent scholar covers in his book, within the confines of a book review. Therefore only a few facets will be discussed with a few brief critical remarks.

If it is taken into consideration that Duvenage, as a South African scholar, is for all practical reasons an "outsider" with respect to the problems he discusses, one can only have appreciation for the objective and scientific manner in which this extensive study was conducted and integrated into a balanced whole. Had he been an American scholar one could legitimately have criticized the fact that the main part of the study was done as a study of secondary sources and not as empirical research in the true sense of the word. In spite of this, his book gives the impression of covering an extremely wide spectrum of problems and literature from various points of view.

An extremely good analysis is given of the various factors within the university and in society as a whole which have given rise to the student rebellion and youth dissent in general. In society as such it was especially the Vietnam war and racial problems which gave rise to student unrest whereas internally the university aggravated these complaints by internal administrative and academic problems and relationships which were not favourable to the fulfilment of academic training in the sense the students visualized the changing task of the university in society.

The fundamental grievance of the student revolt was a discontentment with the "Establishment", seen as the formidable complex of the American society with its formal and static institutions which abuses the university and which uses it as an accomplice in order to accomplish its own technological and capitalistic goals. The revolt of the students

was especially directed towards the government and the university as two institutional representatives of the society, system and establishment from which they wanted to disassociate themselves.

The most comprehensive chapter of this thesis is the one which discusses the deeper background factors. Amongst others attention is given to the so called "generation gap" and its relationship with the whole problem of authority as it manifests itself in the student revolt and cultural revolution of the Hippie generation.

In this chapter a very precise and convincing argument is built up in which the relationship between the crisis of authority, the legitimacy of authority and the modern idea of participating democracy is given.

The problem of authority runs like a golden thread through the whole thesis and gives the reader an insight into the most fundamental problem which Duvenage analyses as a basic problem concerning the whole issue under discussion. Of course he does not state that this is the problem, but the fact that it crops up in practically every section, is a good indication of the importance of this problem in his analysis. It is thus with great expectation that the reader awaits the normative and structural answer to this problem which he poses in the section treating structural problems of the topic. He does not disappoint the expectations of the reader in this respect and earnestly seeks a biblical answer. Only in one sense one still feels a little at a loss: How must this biblical view of authority exactly differ from the traditional authoritarian position and how must it take shape in contrast to the modern idea of democracy and the permissive authoritarian ideal? Not only with respect to this aspect does one feel the need for more concrete guidelines when it comes to the implementation of the normative and structural principles — but maybe this is asking too much of a scholar who has already academically explored so extensively.

Against the background of his analysis of the structural task of the university as an institution of learning in which students and academic staff are grouped together in a academic community, Duvenage also concludes that there is room for student participation apart from the traditional position of the student as an acquirer of knowledge only. Although he

states that this necessitates the participation of the student on all different levels of academic life, he explicitly rejects the idea of student representation on the different academic levels, such as the faculties, senate or Board of a university.

He rejects any form of democratization in which the authority in the different levels is shared by students and other persons when it comes to final decisions. In spite of this emphatic rejection of the modern idea of student democracy, he propagates a basis of partnership and mutual responsibility for the primary and secondary functions of the university. In this respect the attention is drawn to only one problem, viz how must partnership and mutual responsibility be concretized when authority may not be shared in final decisions? The section which evaluates the whole problem, and the structural analysis given in order to formulate guidelines, is very clear and distinct in its exposure of the fundamental dialectical tension of the humanistic ground motive as the basis of the tension between the status quo and the protagonists of revolution in aid of change.

Duvenage very clearly does not choose either the status quo or the revolutionary ideals — a courageous stand to take in a scientific analysis in which it has become fashion to be either the one or the other.

He formulates a stimulating and refreshing starting point for a third way, sidestepping the pitfalls of the stated alternatives and confessing that only an acknowledgement of the vertical dimension can realistically give a solution to the “cul de sac” of both former alternatives. This vertical dimension must take shape in a radical Christian university with science and research done in a radical Christian perspective in order to function as a symbol of the coming of the Kingdom of God in a changing and anarchistic world, which has lost its perspective in academic affairs.

Elaine Botha.