LOUIS SCHNEIDER
(1915-1979)

Louis Schneider, professor of sociology at the University since 1967, passed away suddenly but peacefully in Austin on March 17, 1979, following an embolism. He was at the peak of his career. A few weeks earlier he had completed the manuscript of a book on the social thought of Mandeville, and he was in the midst of several papers dealing with the work of the Scottish Moralists. Still other papers were in mind for the future. The loss of this distinguished and humane scholar is an irreparable one.

Louis Schneider was born in Vienna on March 22, 1915, and came to the United States as a child, being naturalized as a citizen in 1927. His entire career, apart from the war years, was that of a teacher and a scholar. To both of these he was deeply committed. He received his B.A. in 1935, from the College of the City of New York, and his M.A. in 1938, from Columbia University. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. From 1937 to 1943 he served as an instructor in sociology at Brooklyn College. The war years, 1943-1947, were spent in Washington, D.C., as an economist with the War Production Board and the Office of Price Administration. Following the war he completed his Ph.D. at Columbia University, in 1947, and embarked upon his academic career. His mentor, Robert K. Merton, continued to be his ideal as a scholar for the rest of his life. He accepted positions in sociology at Colgate University (1947-1949), Purdue University (1949-1959), Dartmouth College (1959-1960), and the University of Illinois (1960-1967), where he served for four years as head of the department. In 1967 Lou came to Texas, a decision he never regretted. He was a member of the first group of Fellows at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, in California (1954-1955), was an Associate Member of the Center for Advanced Study, the University of Illinois (1965), and served as President of the Ohio Valley Sociological Society (1959-1960). He also served on a number of national professional committees and editorial boards (including those of the American Sociological Review (1956-1959), Sociological Analysis (1969-1972), and the Journal for The Scientific Study of Religion (1969-1972).
Colleagues all over the world knew Lou as a distinguished contributor to two fields in particular: the sociology of religion and the backgrounds of modern sociological theory. His earliest contribution was his doctoral dissertation, which became the basis for his well-known book, *Freudian Psychology and Veblen's Social Theory* (1948). Subsequently Lou won recognition for his *Popular Religion* (with Sanford Dornbusch) (1958), *The Scottish Moralists on Human Nature and Society* (1967), *Sociological Approach to Religion* (1970), *The Sociological Way of Looking at the World* (1975), and several edited works to which he also contributed substantial introductions. In addition to these there were his influential scholarly papers on Adam Smith, Max Weber, Carl Menger, Scottish sociology, irony and paradox, dialectics, the pattern of deferred gratification, and race relations, to note but a few. In all of these studies there is reflected the vision of social science for which Lou is known -- a consistently functional, structural, and processual point of view, a respect for methodological diversity, and an appreciation of intellectual continuities in the social sciences. Among the themes that most intrigued Lou in these studies were those of irony and dialectics. Lou is perhaps best known for his concept of instrumentalism in religion -- the irony that religion, which is often characterized as our "ultimate concern" (Tillich), is often used, in fact, as a means for other ends. A section in one of his books bears the significant title, "Irony: Interaction and Unintended Consequence." For example, it interested Lou that the great roads the Romans built to enable their armies to get out into the Empire were roads the barbarians later used to get into Rome itself. He elaborated the idea that actions taken in the interest of certain system functions often have contrary effects. One of Lou's last articles was entitled "Dialectical Orientation and the Sociology of Religion." Characteristically it deals with antinomianism, among other things, and, again characteristically, reveals immense learning and scholarly depth and caution.

Indeed, Lou was widely read in many fields and in four languages. His scholarship was an integral part of the man. It was his vocation. He imposed high standards of excellence upon himself and he instilled those standards in his students. To colleagues he was the genial and supportive
critic and a never failing resource for ideas and perspective. In faculty councils he could be counted on for unerring good judgment and statesmanship.

Lou's affection for his family, and his loyalty to his friends, came out in his everyday conversations on and off the job. He was compassionate and magnificent. Those who knew him well will recall with a pang his smile and firm extended hand, and his amiable vanity about his physical strength; but his spiritual strength was even more impressive.

Friends and colleagues throughout the academic world, and countless others who came under his influence, and still others who will read his works, will share to some extent the keen personal and intellectual loss of his friends and colleagues at Texas feel, now that Lou Schneider is gone.

Dr. Peter T. Flawn, President
The University of Texas at Austin

Bill D. Francis, Secretary
The General Faculty


"Three Views of Religion," Harvest, Hillel Foundation, Purdue University, Spring, 1954, pp. 2-4.


"Race, Reason and Rubbish Again," Phylon, second quarter, 1962, pp. 149-155.


"Institution," ibid., pp. 338-339.


