

Alcohol, Science and Social Control

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Alcohol, Science and Society was both a beginning and an ending. In its pages we can glimpse the beginning of the publicly-oriented alcoholism movement, a movement which eventually brought into being alcoholism agencies in every state, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and the publicly-funded treatment systems for alcoholics which now treat perhaps 1 million cases a year in the U.S. I term it the "publicly-oriented alcoholism movement" to distinguish it from another intertwined social movement, Alcoholics Anonymous. The existence of A.A. was important in shaping the publicly-oriented alcoholism movement, and many people were active in both movements, but the aims have been very different. A.A. directs its attention inward, at self-help and mutual support. While outwardly-directed activity ("twelfth-step work") is encouraged, it is seen as a personal matter by individuals rather than as a collective activity.

The public health alcoholism movement's attention, on the other hand, is directed outwards, towards persuading the larger society not only to take a different attitude toward alcoholics but also to expend public resources on treatment. Dwight Anderson propounded the position in the pages of the *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* in 1942 (1), and repeated it at the first Yale Summer School in 1943. In *Alcohol, Science and Society*, the argument appears again, tacked on to Anderson's talk on a quite different topic: "Here are four postulates: . . . first, that the problem drinker is a sick man, exceptionally reactive to alcohol; second, that he can be helped; third, that he is worth helping; fourth, that the problem is therefore the responsibility of the healing profession, as well as the established health authorities, and the public generally" (2, p. 367).

Beyond an argument, however, in 1944 the nascent movement was in process of developing an organization that eventually became

the National Council on Alcoholism; the Yale (now Rutgers) Center of Alcohol Studies was in the process of becoming the mecca of the movement; and the Summer School, of which *Alcohol, Science and Society* is a record, was already becoming an occasion of pilgrimage which validated one's authority in the movement. Within the next few months, the Center of Alcohol Studies would start the Yale Plan Clinics and become involved with the precedent-setting Connecticut State Commission on Alcoholism. In a portent of this future, Anderson announced: "There is an organization being formed . . . for the purpose of education on the subject of alcoholism. It is to be called, The National Committee for Education on Alcoholism. . . . Mrs. Marty Mann, who is a student here with you, is to be Executive Director" (2, p. 368).

The story of the brilliant success of the subsequent campaign, by a combination of talented recovered alcoholics with public-relations backgrounds and versatile scholar-entrepreneurs from Yale, joined eventually by many others, has not yet been fully told, although it has its early chronicles (3, 4) and its more recent exegeses (5–8). It would have taken an unusually prescient prophet to have predicted in 1945 where the movement has brought us today.

In *Alcohol, Science and Society*, then, we can already discern around the margins of the main action of the Summer School, a very significant beginning. But the book is also a kind of ending. From some perspectives, it is the last significant glimpse of a world before it was occluded. The world of research and thought about alcohol which succeeded it is enormously larger in its population of scientists and more developed in much of its knowledge. As Anderson had argued to the research constituency (1), one effect of the success of the alcoholism movement was enormously increased support for alcohol research. But in some ways the world of alcohol studies in the era following *Alcohol, Science and Society* was foreshortened and constrained compared to the world it replaced.

Alcohol studies as mirrored in *Alcohol, Science and Society* has a sense of history. Participants knew about the turn-of-the-century research of the Committee of Fifty to Investigate the Liquor Problem (9, pp. 240–243), the origin of the drunkenness offense in ecclesiastical law (10, pp. 301–305), Father Mathew's temperance crusade among the Irish (11, p. 295), and Yandell Henderson's plea for dilution at the time of Repeal (12, p. 41). In the succeeding era, this sense of history was lost; indeed, I believe that many people in the field today might place *Alcohol, Science and Society* itself in an era of prehistory.

In *Alcohol, Science and Society*, alcohol problems are seen

in the perspective of structural and institutional factors as well as in terms of the individual problem drinker. Consideration is given to the interaction of the individual and the social agency, to the role of alcohol in complex society, to inebriety's social aspects, and to the laws controlling the availability of alcoholic beverages. The extent to which structural and interactional sense of the definition of alcohol problems has faded is apparent in a comparison of the table of contents of *Alcohol, Science and Society* with that of the present volume.

Perhaps most crucially, the field of discourse in *Alcohol, Science and Society* is defined as "alcohol studies," and not "alcoholism research." The sparseness of references to "alcoholism" partly reflects the book's appearance at a time of terminological transition. Indeed, when "alcoholism" is used, it is sometimes in the older sense of the health consequences of long-term drinking. The term often used in the book instead is the then already obsolescent "inebriety." But inebriety was meant in a broad sense of problems of drunkenness, rather than in the restricted sense of gamma alcoholism. For most of the lecturers in *Alcohol, Science and Society*, there was more to alcohol studies than research on alcoholism.

The breadth of vision of *Alcohol, Science and Society* reflects the breadth of interests and expertise of the research staff of the early Yale Center of Alcohol Studies, and particularly of the Director of its Summer School, E. M. Jellinek. This same breadth of perspective on alcohol studies can be seen in the early volumes of the *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*. The historical depth of *Alcohol, Science and Society's* view of alcohol studies also reflects the presence among the staff and students at the Summer School of moderate temperance forces, many of whom brought substantial knowledge to bear in the dialogue with the Yale researchers, and gently reminded the audience of the historical antecedents for a disease conceptualization (e.g., 13, p. 417).

After the appearance of *Alcohol, Science and Society*, the focus of research and attention narrowed to center on "clinical alcoholism." Despite his own wide erudition, Jellinek himself had presaged this narrowing in his influential "Outline of Basic Policies for a Research Program on Problems of Alcohol" (14), resisted at the time by Bacon (15). Looking back in 1960, Jellinek acknowledged ruefully that "it must be admitted that in America, the scientific literature and the public and private agencies concerned with 'alcoholism' have concentrated to such a degree on the true alcohol addict and the problem drinker that other important problems arising from the use of alcoholic beverages have been neglected" (16, p. 174).

The shift in focus in the pages of the *Quarterly Journal* after 1945 reflected a change in the direction of the Yale Center of Alcohol Studies. With the foundation of the Yale Plan Clinics and of what became the National Council on Alcoholism, what had been a research organization also became the nucleus of a rehabilitation and social movement. Yale Center staff embarked on a heady round of nationwide speaking tours, radio network broadcasts, and promotional projects (5). The shift to an activist stance coincided with and helped precipitate an estrangement from even the "moderates" in the temperance movement (17). The broader agendas of *Alcohol, Science and Society* were submerged in the flood of alcoholism movement concerns.

As early as 1960, social scientists were calling for a redistancing of research from alcoholism movement agendas (e.g., 18). Twenty years after this new beginning, vigorous traditions of historical research from primary sources are flourishing.¹ Economic and political economic research has broadened in several directions (e.g., 21).² The anthropological, sociological and psychosocial literatures have burgeoned beyond the possibility of coherent summarization (15). Although the over-all weight of the literature is still heavily oriented toward the individual (22), sociological, and more generally, social science research in alcohol studies are no longer constrained within the perspectives of the alcoholism movement.

One aspect of the newer lines of research has been a renewed interest in social controls and drinking behavior. In the titles of the lectures in *Alcohol, Science and Society*, "control" makes only one appearance, in Baird's magisterial lecture (10) on legal controls of drinking. But the broader sociological sense of "social control" is mentioned in Bacon's lecture (23) on "Alcohol and Complex Society," and this broader sense is implicit in the contributions of others.

As I have noted elsewhere (24), the concept of "control" has a number of meanings in the alcohol literature. In the framework alcoholism movement, "control" has referred primarily to the "pathognomic symptom" of the classic disease concept of alcoholism, loss of control over drinking, and thus over one's life (25). Levine (26)

¹See, for example, Blocker's bibliographies (19, 20).

²Also, BUNCE, R. The political economy of California's wine industry. University of California Social Research Group working paper F88, revised January 1980 [Contemporary Drug Problems, forthcoming]; and COOK, P. The effect of liquor taxes on drinking, cirrhosis and auto accidents. Prepared for the National Academy of Sciences' panel on alternative policies affecting the prevention of alcohol abuse and alcoholism, May 1980 [In: MOORE, H. H. and GERSTEIN, D. R., eds. *Alcohol and public policy; beyond the shadow of prohibition*. Washington, D.C.; National Academy Press; 1981].

suggests that this concern over personal control over drinking is an expression of more generalized concerns over the self-control of behavior, first fully expressed in the early 19th century as middle-class interests came to the fore, a suggestion in line with Bacon's discussion of self-control in complex society (23). Today, another individual-level meaning of "control" derives from recent work in behavioral psychology on "controlled drinking" (e.g., 27).

On a societal level, "control" has also had a special meaning. This meaning derives from an elite-based and very successful small social movement which preceded the alcoholism movement but has been largely forgotten. "Alcohol control" as a philosophy of state control of alcoholic beverage production, distribution and sales emerged early in the 20th century in the U.S., drawing on British and Scandinavian antecedents, as a technocratic alternative to prohibition. Instead of prohibiting alcohol, the argument went, the state could manage the alcohol trade so as to minimize alcohol problems. In the depths of the Depression, with Prohibition losing popular support and taxes on alcohol seeming an attractive source of revenue, the well-connected Association against the Prohibition Amendment and the Rockefellers financed a number of studies of "alcohol control" which determined the shape of the regulations adopted at Repeal (28).³ Although the systems paid lip-service to "promotion of temperance," a major aim was to keep order and peace between segments of the relegalized industries. Recently, interest has been renewed in studying the inception, operation and potential of these systems, which still exist in broad outline (e.g., 29).⁴

With a fresh infusion of Scandinavian and Canadian influence, in the form of such locutions as "alcohol control policies," the limited concerns of earlier U.S. discussions of ABC systems have been broadened to encompass a "public health model," in which regulatory controls are seen, along with other public health measures, as a means of minimizing alcohol problems (30, 31). This broader sense of "control" is very close to the sense used by Baird, in *Alcohol, Science and Society*, to cover all legal controls of drinking behavior, including public drunkenness and minimum age of purchase of alcoholic beverages (10).

Even this broader usage, however, is more narrowly defined

³Also, LEVINE, H. and SMITH, D. A selected bibliography on alcohol control, particularly before and at Repeal. University of California Social Research Group working paper F71, December 1977; and LEVINE, H. The Committee of 50 and the origins of alcohol control. University of California Social Research Group working paper F129, August 1980 [Journal of Drug Issues, forthcoming].

⁴Also, MORGAN, P. The evolution of California alcohol policy. University of California Social Research Group working paper F92, April 1979.

than the classic sociological conception of "social control." In the remainder of this chapter I shall examine alcohol and social control in this broad sociological sense, picking up some loose threads in existing literatures and suggesting some directions for their interweaving in the future.

As Pitts notes (32) in his discussion of the concept in the sociological literature, "social control" is "essentially an American term," first popularized in 1901 by Edward Ross. Ross defined social control "as concerned with that domination which is intended and which fulfills a function in the life of society," acting through a variety of material and ideological social institutions. From the first, then, the concept was concerned with both intentions and functions in the existence and exercise of power in society. However, in many sociological discussions the emphasis has been on what Lemert terms "passive" social control, using a "Sumnerian assumption of automaticity in the control process" operating through "reified . . . mores, social norms and social laws" (33, pp. 53, 95). In the hands of such theorists as Talcott Parsons, the concept also became associated with an assumption that deviance derived solely from individual impulses (32, p. 394), so that social control was seen only in terms of society's constraints on individual deviant behavior.

Lemert (33) places social control in the context of a more dynamic, purposive and complex view of societal functioning. Social control is not only a matter of "conformity to traditional norms," but also "a continuous process by which values are consciously examined, decisions made as to those values which should be dominant, and collective action taken to that end" (pp. 53-54). It is not an automatic manifestation of a *conscience collective*, but represents the efforts of "human beings [to] define, regulate and control behavior of other human beings" (p. 29). It is not simply a matter between the individual and the society, but involves also, as both objects and agents of social control, a wide variety of intervening social and cultural collectivities. Whereas such writers as Parsons and Pitts recognize the existence of subcultures, using such terms as "secondary institutions" and "fringe organizations" (32, pp. 384, 393-394), their organismic vision of society (34, p. 235) tends to consider only the functional significance of subcultures for the society at large. Lemert's conception recognizes the pervasiveness of social conflict and change, whether "functional" or not, and the often considerable autonomy of subcultures. Thus subcultures and social organizations can, irrespective of individual impulse, exercise a control on the individual which may put him or her at odds with the larger society. Thus, too, social control, rather than operating always on individuals, is often a matter between collectivities, as in legal controls on cor-

porations or in imperial domination of colonies. That individuals are often used as hostages in such power relations or conflicts does not negate their nature as efforts at social control between collectivities.

Besides his more general sociological discussions of social control, Lemert has made significant contributions on the topic specifically of alcohol and social control, in a widely-disseminated essay (35) and in a 1958 conference presentation recently reprinted (36). The discussions reflect Lemert's flexible general perspective on social control: it is recognized that there are positive functions of drunkenness in some collectivities (35, *p.* 554; 36, *p.* 46), and there is explicit attention to the relation of institutionalized drinking groups to social control (36, *pp.* 47–48). But the main emphasis is on social control in the narrower, public health sense of societal "alcohol control policies"; in fact, issues in the social control of the "addictive drinker" are excluded from the discussion (35, *p.* 569). In my view, Lemert's general contributions on social control as well as his specific discussions of alcohol and social control need to be taken into account in future work.

So far, however, there has been little further literature explicitly on alcohol and social control, although Bruun (37) commented on and offered an alternative to Lemert's typology of alcohol control policies, and Sargent's recent analysis (38) of drinking in terms of "power relations" draws on Lemert's general discussions of social control. Instead, a recent increase in interest in social control and alcohol has been expressed in the form of several so far separate literatures. The best-developed of these is the previously-mentioned line of general discussions of "alcohol control policies," which tend to take social control issues rather for granted in discussions of alternative policy options. This literature seems to be fast attaining serious consideration in the alcohol field (e.g., 31; 39; 40, *pp.* 313–325).⁵ Another area of concern relates alcohol to the general "interests of the state" (41, 42)⁶—fiscal, commercial, social policy and public order interests—in different conditions of societal organization. A third area is a growing "social constructionist" literature, using such terms

⁵Also, the National Academy of Sciences' forthcoming report of the panel on alternative policies affecting the prevention of alcohol abuse and alcoholism. [MOORE, M. H. and GERSTEIN, D. R., eds. *Alcohol and public policy; beyond the shadow of prohibition*. Washington, D.C.; National Academy Press; 1981.]

⁶Also, MORGAN, P. *Examining United States alcohol policy; alcohol policy and the interest of the state*. Presented at the meeting of the Ninth World Congress of Sociology, Uppsala, Sweden, 13–20 August 1978; and MÄKELA, K., ROOM, R., SINGLE, E., SULKUNEN, P., WALSH, B. with 13 others. *Alcohol, society and the state; I. A comparative study of alcohol control*. Toronto; Addiction Research Foundation. [Forthcoming.]

as “ideological hegemony” and “governing image” to emphasize the importance of social definitions in the creation and maintenance of “public domination” (6, 43–46).

So far the literatures have tended to concentrate on specific and often separate sectors of the terrain of alcohol and social control. The control-policy literature is specifically concerned with the control of alcohol-related problems, while the state-interests literature considers alcohol issues in the context of more general issues of social control—production, reproduction, security, etc. In both literatures, the emphasis is on the state’s interests in and powers of control. The social-constructionist literature is oriented rather to the definition and handling of deviance by a variety of social institutions, with a particular emphasis on alternative social rubrics of alcohol-related deviance, but with consideration also of a broader framework in which the alcohol attribution is itself an aspect of the social control choices. Only Sargent (38) has attempted to combine most of these areas of interest in one study.

While it seems appropriate to call for more cross-fertilization between these literatures, it may be premature to attempt any full synthesis. For the moment, it may suffice to draw some distinctions and point to some directions for development. “Alcohol and social control” can clearly have at least two meanings: the social control of alcohol-related problems, or the role of alcohol in social control in general. While much material relevant to the latter topic is available in the anthropological literature, there are few general discussions of the processes involved.

Alcohol, like many other drugs, is potentially an instrument of social control for both the dominant and the subordinate side of power relations, and in relations both at system levels and in face-to-face interactions. At system levels, while denial of alcohol to subordinate statuses is a potential instrument of domination (47),⁷ alcohol has at least as often been useful to rulers as an opiate for the masses (36, pp. 46–47; 45). It is a reflection of a formerly widely-used means of social control (e.g., 48, p. 140) that the International Labor Convention Protocol No. 95 on the Protection of Wages contains provisions prohibiting the payment of wages in the form of strong alcoholic beverages (49, p. 214). On the other hand, drinking is intimately associated with various revolutionary or countercultural movements (50). Taverns were major centers for seditious activities

⁷Also, ROOM, R. Alcohol as an instrument of intimate domination. Presented at the meeting of the Drinking and Drugs Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, New York, 26 August 1980.

by the colonials in the events preceding the American Revolutionary War (51). Lurie (52) has argued that American Indian drinking patterns can be interpreted as a permanent "protest movement" against the dominant Anglo culture.

Many of these system-level relations are impersonal in nature; alcohol is not necessarily involved directly in the relations of the dominant and the subordinate. But alcohol is also potentially an instrument of social control in face-to-face and intimate relations. The greater acceptance of drinking by men and other dominant statuses, and the cultural belief in alcohol's power to disinhibit, make alcohol a useful instrument of domination in intimate relations.⁷ On the other hand, alcohol is also a potential tool for the subordinate. Trice and Belasco (53) have related how immediate subordinates often benefit by keeping the company president well plied with liquor, and Lurie (52) and Stivers (48, *pp.* 155 *ff*) portray drunkenness as a major element in roles oppressed ethnicities played out to some extent to their own advantage.

There are two directions in which studies of the social control of alcohol problems might be particularly fruitful. The first is attention to the interaction of social control and the "social worlds" of heavy drinking (54). On the one hand, there has been little systematic discussion of the processes of social control in drinking groups. Bruun's pathbreaking study (55) of drinking behavior in small groups of workmates, with its evidence of repeated pressures to drink more but of none to drink less, has not yet been followed up. Burns' (56) account of a night of "getting rowdy with the boys" in working-class Boston is evocative in its description not only of the processes of hell-raising but also of the pressures on the narrator to join and stay with the occasion. Mass-observation's account (57) of the exact matching with which the draining of glasses proceeds, sip by sip, in groups in British pubs suggests how fine-grained the social controls of drinking can be. The most systematic accounts available of controls within drinking groups are of Skid Row "bottle gangs" (58-60).

On the other hand, there is also little but anecdotal evidence of the processes by which the larger society exercises control over drinking groups and the social worlds of heavy drinking, except, again, for Skid Row (60-62). Few discussions of teen-age drinking follow Sower's lead (63) in viewing it as group behavior and studying the dynamic processes of adult attempts at control and the teen-age world's patterned evasions. In this general area of social control, again Lemert offers some starting-points for analysis (36, *pp.* 47-48).

The second general direction of study is the social handling of those identified as having alcohol problems—already a major con-

cern of the social-constructionist literature, as mentioned above. In fact, the strength of this literature, in line with general sociological trends, has been its insistence in viewing therapy, supports, and rehabilitation efforts as serving—among other functions—as instruments of social control. But so far, the discussion tends to have been focused around one thematic dimension, the “medicalization of deviance”: the general shift in recent decades from legal and penal to medical and therapeutic models and institutions to deal with alcohol and a variety of other problems. Although there has been some recognition of the potential to shift in the opposite direction, as in the case of drugs during the 1920s (64), or towards redefinition away from being a “public problem” (65), as happened during the 1970s to homosexuality (46), there has been in my view too single-minded an emphasis on the medicalization dimension, which provides only a part of the recent history of social control and handling of those with alcohol problems. For example, already in California in 1950, before the publicly-oriented alcoholism movement had made its influence felt, two of the three major social institutions handling those with alcohol problems—mental hospitals, county general hospitals, jails—operated under a medical rubric. An interpretation of the subsequent history requires attention not only to medicalization and the efforts of the movement but also to such other general dimensions of change in the exercise of social control as: “deinstitutionalization” in the handling of deviant populations; transfer of financing of social handling to state and federal levels in connection with recurrent fiscal crises in local government; the individualization of the definition of problems, particularly in the 1950s and 1970s; differentiation of social services in the postwar era; and increases in insurance coverage and scope.⁸

The years since *Alcohol, Science and Society* have seen a great deal of mapping of the social terrain of alcohol use and problems, using surveys, observations, indirect measures, social statistics, etc. But much of the mapping has treated the terrain as a flat surface, with no vertical axis. As Bruun (66) noted in a review of Jessor et al.’s analysis of drinking in a tri-ethnic community, there has been a miss-

⁸BUNCE, R., CAMERON, T., MORGAN, P., MOSHER, J. and ROOM, R. California’s alcohol control experience, 1950–1980. University of California Social Research Group working paper F108, revised November 1980 [To be published as: California’s alcohol experience; stable patterns and shifting responses. In: SINGLE, E., MORGAN, P. and DE LINT, J., eds. *Alcohol, society and the state; II. The social history of alcohol control experiences in seven countries*. Toronto; Addiction Research Foundation; forthcoming]; and ROIZEN, R. and WEISNER, C. *Fragmentation in alcoholism treatment services; an exploratory analysis*. University of California Social Research Group Rep. C24, October 1979.

ing dimension, that of power: "one could ask if it really is fruitful to define deviance in purely statistical terms, without consideration of content and without thought of who are the agents of social control, who define deviance, and how do they operate."

Maps with no topological indication are not much use in hilly terrain. We need to add the contour-lines of the social control dimension to our understanding of drinking practices and problems.

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