Peeter Blau, a refugee from the Anschluss, used to tell a joke from his youth that involved God assigning attributes to the various nations. The Lord proposed to make all Germans smart, honest, and sociologists. The Archangel Michael, however, convinced God that this was too generous. And so God decreed that all Germans should have only two of the three qualities.

Peter told this story to illustrate the idea that social identification is a complex activity. But his words also demonstrate the potential conflicts between the different social influences on an individual’s life. The story also highlights the importance of understanding the complex interplay of social forces that shape a person’s identity.

During his time as an undergraduate, Peter had to make a choice between two rival sociology departments. The Department of Social Science at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill had already become a major center for sociological research and teaching. However, the Department of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison was also emerging as a leading institution.

Peter was faced with a difficult decision. On the one hand, he knew that the University of Wisconsin was a prestigious institution with a strong tradition of sociological research and teaching. On the other hand, he was attracted to the innovative and exciting work being done at the University of North Carolina.

In the end, Peter chose the University of North Carolina. He was drawn to the university’s dynamic and forward-thinking approach to sociological research. He was also impressed by the university’s commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive academic community.

During his time at the University of North Carolina, Peter developed a strong reputation as a scholar and teacher. He was known for his innovative and thought-provoking research, as well as his engaging and dynamic teaching style.

Peter’s work was characterized by a deep commitment to understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of social life. He was especially interested in the ways in which social processes shape individual and collective identities. His research often focused on the interplay between structural factors and individual agency, and he was committed to developing a sociological perspective that could account for both.

Peter’s research was highly influential, and he was widely regarded as one of the most important sociologists of the 20th century. His work has continued to inspire and inform sociologists around the world, and he is remembered as a tireless and dedicated scholar who made significant contributions to our understanding of the social world.

Peter Blau passed away in 2016, but his legacy lives on through the many students and colleagues who were influenced by his work. He will always be remembered as a visionary thinker and a true pioneer in the field of sociology.