

SOCIOLOGY

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FOURTH EDITION



CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG & CO.

1923

EDITOR'S PREFACE

THERE are many books on Sociology; nearly all of them, however, rather ponderous tomes of forbidding aspect to the reader who approaches the subject for the first time. The application of scientific principles to social data has brought about a systematizing of material, and the development of a rough approximation to a science. This science is now called Sociology. To bring together the main features of this science in a small volume for the general reader is the purpose of the author. The book should open the way to a larger appreciation of what is going on in the study of social phenomena.

F. L. M.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THERE is some justification for a small volume on sociology which the public generally may read, and perhaps study clubs and secondary schools may use as a guide. I do not question the usefulness of such a book if organized and readable. When so many issues are placed before the public, and such diverse views as to appropriate collective action exist, there is a serious demand for a broader sociological knowledge which will steady the judgment and help decide questions on principle. The study of society as an evolution, the consideration of the constitution of societal life, and reflection upon the methods by which society is controlled and improved, should give a basis for the forming of judgments about what should be undertaken, and of a rational optimism as to the final realization of a better social order.

The popular conception of the nature of sociology is often hazy and requires information. Sociology is liable to be identified with slumming, charity and philanthropy, empty observations of public spectacles, socialism, and kindred phenomena. While all of these items may fur-

Author's Preface

nish data for sociological generalizations, a brief study of the subject of sociology will serve to distinguish it from any and all of them.

This book pretends to be merely an introduction to the study of sociology. There is nothing original in it except that it is the formulation and views of a teacher and student of the vast field of sociology. It was prepared to meet the demands of those who have some curiosity about the nature of society and sociology, but have not a great deal of time in which to satisfy it. Sufficient references accompany the various chapters to enable the reader and student to make a larger study of the subject, and it is hoped that this simple outline will not extinguish any wholesome craving for information, but may even whet the appetite for subsequent and more extensive investigations.

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SOCIOLOGY

CHAPTER I

THE SCIENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

WHILE this small volume does not purport to represent in an explicit manner the science of sociology, it does suggest that there may be such a science. As a consequence, some explanation should be made of what sociology treats and what its relation is to other sciences.

Sociology a Science

In saying that sociology is a science the term science is used in its ordinary sense. There are those who say that sociology is not a science. If by science is meant absolute exactitude and predictability, the charge is true. But the statement is equally applicable to most of the subjects that are now denominated sciences, for the element of exactitude and the basis of prediction are very small in all save astronomy and portions of physics and chemistry. With reference to the social science group, there are none in which the generalizations as a whole rest on a scientific

statistical basis so that accurate predictions, as to the future relationships among their phenomena may be made. Only the somewhat elastic meaning of the term science—that it consists of a systematic body of knowledge from which tendencies in phenomena may be perceived—is applicable to most of the sciences and to the social sciences in particular. But such a body of knowledge is useful for directive purposes and it furnishes the foundation for a development toward a greater degree of exactitude. Such a body of knowledge is offered in sociology.

Development of Sociology

Sociology is one of the newer of the social sciences. As compared with the age of history and economics it is a mere youth. A few ideas which are of a sociological nature date from the time of Plato and Aristotle, but no general science of society was formulated before the time of August Comte and Herbert Spencer. Each of these men drew up a system of social philosophy to which was given the name of sociology. In the United States, Lester F. Ward was the first to develop an independent system of social philosophy.

The science of sociology has had a rapid growth in the United States and has become a regular part of the curriculum in most of the colleges and universities. In England, since the time

of Herbert Spencer, it has developed but little until recently, probably because Spencer demonstrated so effectually to Englishmen that while human intervention might greatly harm society it could do little toward its improvement. The science of economics as formulated by the Germans has been so largely of a general sociological nature that little need has been found for a sociology until recently. But during recent times German economists and other social scientists have insisted that a demand exists for such a science, and as a consequence sociology is being developed and established as a part of the curricula of higher institutions of learning. Elsewhere in Europe it is exhibiting a sustained growth.

The Task of Sociology

The late arrival of sociology was largely due to the difficulty encountered in reducing the phenomena of a complicated social order to generalizations of a simple and universal character. For the task of a sociology is to put into scientific form the plain perception that there is such a thing as society, that it is constituted of many parallel as well as conflicting interests, that it has had an origin and an evolution in which by some means and in some manner the various interests have preserved a unity, that it is based on principles which may be discovered and under-

stood, and that an understanding of these principles enables a given society to modify the course of its own development. As yet sociology has imperfectly accomplished this task, but it has made praiseworthy advances toward that realization. A judgment regarding whether it will be able to discover a single principle of explanation, or will be constructed on the basis of many principles, lies in the future. And while there is at present a diversity of view and method of treatment among professional sociologists, there is nevertheless fundamental agreement as to the nature of society and the larger features of the nascent science. But there should be little question as to the utility of a science which attempts to give an intelligent account of the total collective life regarded as a totality. The human mind will never rest until it has accomplished this task, and many considerations of practical import demand that such a discipline be worked out.

It is the business of sociology to explain that great phenomenon which we term human society as a collectivity. To accomplish this it would be necessary to give an account of the origin and evolution of society, of the forces or conditions which cause its development or retardation, of the principles on which its organization depends, of the principles of progress, of the possibility of effectual human intervention, and of the agencies by which social control and direction

are to be attained. Sociology seeks to make society an object of scientific study in the same manner that biology, for example, makes the physical organism an object of its study. And as biology seeks to discover the constituent parts and functions of the organism, their relation to each other and to the whole organism, and the laws of growth, so sociology is concerned with the study of social structures and functions, their interrelationships, their relationships with the total collective life, and the principles of development and the laws of progress.

Sociology and Other Social Sciences

Since it is the undertaking of sociology to view society as a whole and always to view individuals and phenomena in their relation to this totality, there can be no difficulty in distinguishing that science from the other social sciences, such as economics, politics, anthropology, and history. Without attempting an exhaustive examination of all the social sciences in relation to sociology or of those considered in this relationship, it may prove useful to suggest the relation of two or three of the other social sciences to sociology. As a preliminary statement, however, it is necessary to point out that the essential difference in general between sociology and those sciences consists in the fact that sociology seeks to correlate all of the fundamental lines of human

interests, giving no particular interest special emphasis, while each of the other social sciences essentially confines its attention to one great interest, treating other interests only in so far as they have a bearing on the dominant interest chosen for emphasis.

There are two sciences which deal with the earlier life of mankind — anthropology and ethnology. The first gives an account of the origin and development of man as a physical individual, and of the origin and classification of races as a physical fact. Ethnology, while it may cover some of that ground, chiefly considers primitive man in his group and cultural aspects, dealing with the beginnings of artifacts, science, belief, systems of numbers and language, and of institutions in general. Because the other social sciences devote themselves to civilized man, anthropology and ethnology restrict themselves to primitive man. In so far as sociology attends to the primitive field it considers the origin of society as such, and gives only a generalized account of the origin and development of particular institutions.

The science of politics, or of government and law, devotes its attention to the political interest. It seeks to explain how government originates, to give a causal account of the great stages of political development, to consider the agencies and means by which the governmental purpose is

executed, and to designate tendencies in the development of the state and methods of betterment. Thus government or politics explains how peoples and communities realize their collective purposes by establishing state agencies. But politics concerns itself with society in general and with other fundamental interests and processes only in so far as those matters have a bearing on government and political affairs. Customs, manners, and the working of the social mind are facts and items which for most part are outside the pale of political considerations, yet they are big factors in society at large. These, together with the correlation of social interests in general, it is the function of sociology to interpret.

While government deals with collective action and purpose as they realize themselves through the state, economics treats chiefly of voluntary individual and collective efforts directed toward the satisfaction of wealth interests. Consequently, economics explains the nature of the material wants, how they create goods or wealth, considers the factors of production in their relation to the production of wealth, the mechanism of exchange and distribution, the principles of finance and taxation, and allied topics. And while the wealth interest is a tremendous factor in human society its consideration does not exhaust the category of human interests nor explain the synthesis of interests save as related to material

satisfactions. Human nature lies behind the wealth interest, and that interest is conditioned by conventions, customs, beliefs, social currents of almost a cosmical sweep, class and caste prejudice, and racial antipathies, which it is the business of sociology to treat, together with its general synthetic task.)

Thus it is to be observed that to each social science is given its particular and special task in the total economy of the social sciences. No one of these sciences can do the work of the others save at the expense of changing its nature and ceasing to be itself. Their relationship is not a question of priority, of superior dignity, or of higher and lower. Each one is dignified in the doing of its work well. On the basis of the division of labor pertaining to each and all of them working together in a common domain there should obtain among the social sciences the largest measure of coöperation.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN OF SOCIETY

IT is necessary to distinguish between the different meanings of the term society. The sociological meaning of "society" is distinct from that employed popularly in such phrases as "the best society," and "going into society." This popular use of the term reflects a narrow, special significance, pertaining, as it does, to but one feature of the group life. Even among sociologists and social scientists generally the term "society" possesses several meanings. It is employed as a generic term to express the characteristics of associational life in general; it is used also to denote various special forms of group life, such as the family, the state, the city, the nation, the church, and organized labor. Hence, it appears that the word "society," when used sociologically, may mean human associations generally, just as "humanity" signifies all kinds of men; or a particular society like the city or nation; or a group of men within a given society who are bound together by a strong common interest such as commercial, labor, and other kinds of organizations; or, finally, it may mean the civilized world viewed in its associational aspect. The last interpreta-

tion corresponds to the "world-society," so far as one exists; for, of course, a complete world-society cannot appear until all races and groups of men are brought into an interfunctioning relationship with one another.

Where Society Begins

Sociologists have engaged in an interesting discussion of the question, Where does society begin? That their conclusions differ is due to the fact that they have not agreed in their choice of characteristics which shall serve as the criterion of societal life. Thus one eminent writer lays emphasis on the rational factor, to the exclusion of the instincts and emotions and, as a consequence, he places the origin of society neither among animals nor at the beginning of the human species but far up in the course of the evolution of man. Another distinguished writer goes to the other extreme, and noting the ease and celerity with which emotional phenomena sweep through vast populations, he makes suggestion the criterion of society. Upon this basis society would have its origin in the course of evolution wherever the psychical process of suggestion makes its appearance.

While neither position is correct in characterizing the essentials of society, the latter view permits the closer approximation to the origin of society. Society embraces both coöperation and