

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

A BEHAVIORISTIC STUDY OF
AMERICAN SOCIETY

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TO THE
Pioneers of American Sociology

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INTRODUCTION

These two volumes rest upon the frank recognition of the fact that a new epoch has already been reached in the development of sociological science, namely, that it has attained to a stage where its data and bibliography have become so complex and elaborate as to elude or defy mastery by a single mind. The day of the pioneers, who, unaided, courageously assumed to produce treatises on "general sociology" or the "principles of sociology" covering the entire subject, is now over. In a recent sketch of contemporary sociology nearly twenty large pages were required to compile the merest classified outline and bibliography of the chief contributors now actively at work in the various domains of sociological endeavor. Sociological work must henceforth be coöperative.

As a textbook the present volume differs from previous works in at least five outstanding particulars. *First*, it is a joint creative product of many minds. For a long time, sociologists and others interested in the science of society have longed for an introductory text which was not based on some one particularistic theory. The present treatise is unique in being the coöperative endeavor of a group of seven sociologists of standing, each of whom has specialized in some one particular aspect and contributes his own findings to the composite picture. The men selected were chosen both because of the quality of material which they have already published and because they were known to be fearless in their search for truth. *Second*, it is the first general textbook on sociology to take into account the important cultural approach to social analysis, first systematically expounded by Professor W. F. Ogburn in his book on *Social Change*. *Third*, this is the first sociological text which frankly attempts to make a behavioristic study of society. It also deals to an unprecedented degree with the science of sociology as it is applied to the concrete problems which Americans are facing in the social order of our time. The text itself has been hammered out in the "give and take" of classroom use. Each one of the authors has been shaping and reshaping his materials through years of experi-

mentation. *Fourth*, the volume is unique in its use of the case method. Each chapter is followed by case problems which grip the interest of the student and almost compel him to think about the principles presented. Some teachers may wish to suggest that the student read these in advance of each chapter. There are also problems for research and a bibliography for those students who want to penetrate further into each of the subjects discussed. *Finally*, the text is further supplemented by a second volume, of carefully selected readings, which are correlated with the material as presented in the first volume. As far as the authors know, this is the only sociological work now available which combines an original treatment in one volume with a source book of readings in a supplementary volume. It is possible to use the first alone, since it presents a comprehensive survey of the entire field, although most teachers will want to use the collateral readings also.

In the past there have been those who thought of sociology as "a field for the exploitation of mere opinion"; and in fact it too often has been "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The time has come when it is impossible to term the trained sociologist as "the fake professor of a pretended science." After all, science is merely a symbol for an accurate and ordered picture of the world in which we live; this description, of necessity, includes ourselves and our fellows. Science merely attempts to understand and interpret what James once so aptly described as "this big blooming buzzing confusion" in terms of tested, sorted, and understandable data. Sociology claims the same right to be called a science as do chemistry, physics, and mathematics, although because of the interpenetrative complexity of the phenomena with which sociology must deal it is faced with the more difficult task of describing precisely what happens in group behavior rather than in the realm of matter. It should be added that with the increase of knowledge about so-called "material objects" we are no longer so ready to recognize that traditional descriptions are final; so that in reality physics and chemistry in the past may have been about as inadequate in their classification and description as sociology has sometimes been. It is quite conceivable that the electron may be something akin to an organism and that for "physics there is no intrinsic reality."¹

¹ Cf. Whitehead, A. N., *Science in the Modern World*, p. 223.

In the last analysis, it is conceivable that through the statistical method sociology may yet find that it can be as definite and precise as other sciences have thought themselves. It seems probable, however, that, as Giddings has so admirably stated, sociology must remain content not with quantitative measurements so much as with observation, comparison, and correlation. No one can successfully maintain that these methods are not scientific; it will be remembered that precisely this type of patient investigation gave to the world the theory of evolution.

How is sociology distinguished from other branches of knowledge? Without attempting an elaborate discussion of this matter, it may be worth while to state the differences through cryptic "short-hand" summaries which in the nature of the case are somewhat inadequate and will need to be modified and expanded by the student. Zoology asks the question, "what is the animal?"; botany, "what is the plant?"; biology, "what is life?"; while sociology seeks to answer the query, "what is the group?" To state the matter in a slightly different way, history is in large measure a record of past events, a picture of the rise and fall of human destiny; economics is concerned with wealth-getting and wealth-using; psychology is a study of the individual and his behavior; political science or government is an analysis of the mechanism of the authority of the state; ethics treats of moral values; while sociology embraces the field of group behavior.

For almost as long a time as mankind has lived in groups, there has been an embryonic study of sociology, for man has pondered on his origin and his relationship with his fellows. To-day, after scores of thinkers have added their contribution, the science is still in its infancy; but of one thing we can be sure — it will have a permanent place. The university which continues to function without a department of sociology is an anachronism. If education is to fit students for life, no one should reach maturity without knowing just those facts which sociology attempts to give.

One difficulty in the past has been that sociology has been used for the exploitation of particularistic theories. Thus one text has differed widely from another both in content and in methodology, and we have had sociologists who emphasized the following factors, among others: the historical; the political; the "Great Man Theory"; the geographic; the biologic; the economic; the anthropological; the cultural; the psychological; methodology; some one princi-

ple, such as imitation, consciousness of kind, social contract, division of labor, conflict; and finally those who stressed the idealogical, the philanthropical, or the practical applications of sociology to life. Gradually with the passage of time there has begun to emerge a certain synthesis, a particular body of facts and principles which are rather widely recognized as comprising the sociological field. It is to-day generally conceded that any well-rounded sociology should treat the following aspects of group life: (1) historical, (2) geographic, (3) biologic, (4) psychologic, (5) cultural, (6) organization of society, (7) application to social problems. Sociology may therefore be defined as *the science which attempts to describe the origin, growth, structure, and functioning of group life by the operation of geographical, biological, psychological, and cultural forces operating in interpenetration through a process of evolution.*

In the light of this definition, we have undertaken in the present treatise to give a clear picture of American society. In Book One we trace the history of the "Great Society" from its origins, through the "Early River Valley Civilizations" down to the industrialization of our contemporary acquisitive society. In Book Two we analyze the four major forces which are shaping the social order at any given moment: the effect of the physical environment upon sociological conditions in the United States, the biological factors in social life, the psychological foundations of society, and its cultural heritage. In Book Three we describe the product of these operating forces, namely, the types of social groups, their organization and control. Finally, in Book Four, we consider the application of sociology to some of the great outstanding problems of our time: the reconstruction of society, the American home, the conservation of health, recreation, poverty, crime, racial conflict, and the economic order.

It is at once apparent that no one individual can hope adequately to treat all these topics in a comprehensive fashion. Sociology in the future will increasingly be a coöperative science, where many minds interpenetrate to achieve creative discovery. In the present text this principle has been recognized, as we have noted, by the selection of joint authors whose interests and studies have led them into these several specialties.

Especially is this coöperative principle imperative in the sociological field because we are dealing with group life. Every individual, whether scientist or layman, is living within groups of one kind

or another; consequently his viewpoint tends to be colored by his experience. His prejudices may unconsciously affect his observations. Moreover, a science of society must of necessity coördinate a large number of specializations; it therefore has a tendency to be vague and generalized and to leave the student with a sense of bewilderment. This is increased because of the baffling complexity of all social phenomena. The intricate nexus of causal factors reach out to the far corners of the earth and to a period thousands of aeons away, when man did not exist at all on this planet. Sociology in the past tended to rest on a series of "hunches" — guesses — which may have been right, — but then again they may have been wrong.

Now these difficulties are in very large measure guarded against when a group join together to present a reliable and accurate synthesis of the field; particularly is this the case if, instead of making dogmatic, sweeping generalizations, they attempt to raise questions and record facts. The authors are quite willing to recognize that much of what they have written is not final, nor can the analysis be complete; it probably never will be. It is true that we are still in the formative stage of social science, but because of this very fact the subject presents a particular challenge. It deals with life, it touches every one where he lives; to the serious student it offers the opportunity of contributing his own original and creative thought.

We live in an era of specialization in science and in industry, and hence in textbook writing; but it must not be overlooked that specialization in its turn presents grave dangers, such as lack of balance, perspective, and reality. There may be elements of repetition and contradiction among different collaborators in a joint volume. It may be charged that the immature student will be confused as to which emphasis is right. We can only answer that in so far as there are differing points of view presented, he will so much the more be stimulated to think for himself — that that situation and process are inescapable in life. As for repetition, we recognize its presence but believe that a certain measure of reiteration is necessary to make men think and that its advantages as used herein far outweigh its disadvantages. As between a beautifully symmetrical and artistic pattern prepared by one writer and a group picture by several, we believe that the average student will discover more of the truth and be more likely to learn how to think from the many than from the one. After all, there is danger in feeding coherent and predigested material of one variety to immature minds, and there may even be

something wholesome in the discovery of contradictions and discrepancies.

Sociology helps men to see a rounded picture of group life and development and this demands coöperative team work on the part of authors as well as of governments. Sociology should be a coördinator which helps man to brush aside the mental cobwebs of particularistic explanations and to see society as a whole. How many Americans now see clearly, for instance, that we have a dualism between our ideals and our practices? How many recognize that collectively we have lost our sense of values in the drive for immediate material success? How many sense the aesthetic starvation in our life, the obedience to blind regimentation, the slavery to the folkways which bind us whether we will or not?

Sociology should teach us not to bow down in stupid reverence to the past; it should help us to break with some of the unreasoning prejudices and reverences which enslave us to the things of yesterday and which, incidentally, make us commit even worse mistakes in our time while we proudly proclaim that we are "carrying on" the traditions of the fathers.

Theodore Roosevelt once said: "What we need is to turn out of our colleges young men with ardent convictions on the side of the right." This course should prevent men from blindly rushing in to defend "the right" without first raising the fundamental questions: what is the right? how do I know it is right? was it always right? is it really right for *all* the people? in fact, may not the exact opposite be right? We cannot hope to answer all the questions raised, but it may be possible to start a train of thought ~~which~~ step by step may help to add to our store of truth.

The World War and its aftermath have made millions of men question the existing social structure. By some such process as has been outlined, sociology would turn this criticism and unrest into constructive channels.

In conclusion, the editor desires to express his sincere and grateful appreciation to all those whose labor has helped to produce this book, including those who have read the manuscript or corrected proof and those whose labor has helped to set the type and bind the volumes. His especial thanks go to the writers who have so wholeheartedly joined with him in the production of these volumes.

JEROME DAVIS

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