A HISTORY OF SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

BY

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To The
SOCIOLOGISTS
of the
FUTURE

Preface

THE STORY OF SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY, of all that man has thought regarding human relations, their origin and destiny, is even more thrilling than the story of philosophy, because it is more vital to human welfare. What man has thought regarding his universe, his mind, and the meaning of his individual existence is, of course, of the deepest interest; but it hardly has the tragic significance for his welfare that is possessed by his thought about his institutions, his culture, and the meaning of his history.

The story is too long, however, to be told in any single work. Moreover, it is only just beginning to be written. That is true regarding even the great currents of social thought that have guided the development of our own civilization. Regarding the social thought of peoples and civilizations other than our own, we know as yet very little. We know, indeed, that there must have been thought to guide the development of their cultures and institutions; for some sort of thought, some sort of a philosophy of social values, has always guided man in the development of his institutions and human relations, even though sufficient allowance is made for uncon-

scious adaptation. It still remains true, no matter how large a part has been played in human history by the unintended, that men everywhere have had social values, and have usually had some reflective thought to support and justify them. This was true of the American Indians, of the African Negroes, and of the South Sea Islanders. In India and China, we find a voluminous social philosophy analogous in some respects to that developed by western Europe, though utterly lacking in scientific method.

With all of the social philosophies of peoples and civilizations other than our own, we shall not be concerned. They are of interest to the historian of culture, but they are not vitally connected with the problems of our own civilization. We shall even leave aside the social philosophies of Russia and the Near Orient, though they have many vital interconnections with our own. We shall confine ourselves mainly to the social theories developed by the four leading peoples of western Europe, the Italians, the French, the English, and the German, though the fountain source of all of these social philosophies in Greek thought will necessarily claim our attention. It is these social philosophies of western Europe that control the social tradition of our civilization, and hence are interwoven with its many social problems.

We call this the story of social philosophy, rather than of sociology, because, according to the views of certain sociologists, scientific sociology did not begin until about a generation ago, although we shall see that from the time of Aristotle onward the so-

cial thought of our western nations was not unaffected by scientific methods. It was, however, so interwoven with the development of general philosophy and with philosophical implications of various sorts that it is better to speak of the social thought previous to the twentieth century, for the most part, as social philosophy; and this will happily save us the trouble of trying to draw a line between science and philosophy. Then, too, historically, "science is not to be dissociated from philosophy, any more than philosophy from science." Both have developed together; and practically we shall see that Professor Flint's dictum, that "science can only prosper when it strives to become philosophic, as philosophy can only prosper when it strives to become scientific," has been especially exemplified in the social sciences.

As I have just implied, this survey will come to an end shortly after the opening of the twentieth century. It is always unsafe to attempt to pass judgment upon one's living contemporaries. We are too near them to see them in a fair perspective, and this is especially true in the social sciences because many men with different points of view are working in this field, and it will probably be a long time before there is among them any general agreement. Indeed, the whole field of the social sciences is a field of controversy, and one object of this historical survey is to shed light upon the origin of existing controversies, and, if possible, make some little contribution to their solution.

Because this is the story of social philosophy, we

shall not be overcareful about the boundaries between the social sciences. This is, indeed, impossible in the early development of social thought, because, as Herbert Spencer would say, social thought proceeds from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from the indefinite to the definite. In early times it was predominantly religious, at a later stage it was predominantly political, and in recent times it has been predominantly economic. Nevertheless, the main problems of sociology as a science will furnish the outline of our analysis.

For many reasons, the biographical method has been chosen to tell the story of this development. We shall select outstanding individuals in the history of social thought, outline their doctrines, and briefly describe the conditions under which their thinking took place. One reason for using the biographical method is the obvious importance of unique biographical incidents in determining thinking. This importance of strictly individual biographical elements has often been denied by social and cultural determinists of the rigid sort; but we hope to show that the evidence for the influence of unique biographical incidents is overwhelming. To recognize the influence of the uniquely biographical will not prevent us from recognizing fully the influence of general cultural and social conditions also, nor from tracing the growth of social and political traditions in western civilization. Indeed, the purpose of this book is to trace and evaluate the great currents of social thought in our civilization. To paraphrase Flint's words, we propose, therefore,

not merely to pass in historical review some of the more famous of the many attempts that have been made in western civilization to discover the laws and principles that regulate human affairs, but also to pass judgment on the truth or falsity of what is essential and characteristic in them, indicating their chief merits and defects from the standpoint of impartial social science.

In the life of each of our thinkers, accordingly, we shall briefly outline the biographical incidents that may have influenced his social thought, noting the general social and cultural conditions that surrounded him, and the immediate predecessors who may have influenced him. Then we shall take up the scientific method, or lack of method, of each thinker; for we shall find that thinking is always limited, if not determined, by the method employed. Next, we shall outline the thinker's doctrine, if he has such, of social origins, then his doctrine of social development, then his doctrine of social organization and functioning, and, finally, his doctrines of social order and of social progress. But it will not always be possible to follow this order of presentation in a systematic way, because social thinking, with most thinkers, has been so fragmentary that it has rarely covered the whole field of problems outlined.

The thinkers selected have been chosen with a view to making the story of the development of sociological theories in western civilization down to the year 1900 as complete and systematic as possible. No doubt many important thinkers have been

omitted; but they are not important for the understanding of the confusion of social philosophies that now prevails in our western world.

It is idle to try to indicate even the chief authorities to whom the author is indebted. Montesquieu put on the title page of his famous treatise the legend, "Offspring without a mother;" we, on the contrary, would claim that our story of social philosophy has had so many mothers that we cannot enumerate them! The only originality we would claim for the book is its interpretation.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Primitive Social Thought

ALL PEOPLES OF WHOM we have records have had some thought about their institutions, customs, and human relations.[1] Most of this earlier social thought was a part of folk-lore and religion. A single example will suffice for our purpose. The Cheyenne Indians, an Algonquian tribe that had wandered westward to the Rocky Mountains, and that had reverted practically to savagery, had in their legends and folk-lore what seemed to them adequate explanations of the origin and form of practically all of their institutions, customs, and social behavior. This was true not only of their tribal organization, but of their family life, their property

[1] See Bogardus, *A History of Social Thought*, Second Edition, Chapters I, II, III.