

Second Edition

The Social Condition of Humanity

An Introduction to Sociology

Irving M. Zeitlin

Irving M. Zeitlin

University of Toronto

THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF HUMANITY:

An Introduction to Sociology

SECOND EDITION

New York Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1984

Copyright © 1981, 1984 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Zeitlin, Irving M.

The social condition of humanity.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Sociology. I. Title.

HM51.Z44 1983 301 83-2286

ISBN 0-19-503350-7

Printing (last digit): 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

Printed in the United States of America

THE SOCIAL
CONDITION
OF HUMANITY

For Esther, Ruthie, Michael, Bethie, and Jeremy

Preface to the Second Edition

In this new edition I have taken the opportunity to add new material which is essential for an understanding of the world in the late twentieth century.

The chapter on ethnic minorities now includes a discussion of the term *race*. This word is firmly a part of the popular vocabulary. People speak of the white, black, and yellow races, and the term is even mistakenly applied to religious and cultural groups. I therefore provide a much-needed clarification of the concepts "race" and "ethnic groups."

In chapter 9, I have added data from the 1980 U.S. census on marriage and divorce and on households of the family and nonfamily types. To chapter 12 I have added new material on white-collar and corporate crime; and in chapter 13, I have made a few small changes in the section on the Greek city-state in order to reflect current scholarly opinion more faithfully.

The most significant and substantial change, however, is a new final chapter called The Developed and the Developing Countries: **A Program for Human Survival**. Conceived as a continuation of chapter 14, Social Change, Modernization, and Development, the new material addresses several urgent questions: Why has the American economy fallen behind? What can be learned from the experience of other capitalist-industrial countries? What can be done about the plight of a large portion of the Third World populations where poverty is so extreme that it frequently results in massive starvation, social chaos, and brutal repression?

Preface to the Second Edition

Finally, the new chapter deals with the most urgent question of all: The entire human race and, indeed, all of earth's inhabitants today live in the shadow of the danger of a nuclear holocaust. Can this frightful menace be eliminated? More and more people now recognize that there is only one way to answer this question if humanity is to survive.

I.M.Z.

Contents

- 1 SOCIOLOGY: ITS SCOPE AND CENTRAL CONCERNS 3
Questions Addressed Sociologically in This Book 5
- 2 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE 11
The Human Species in the Animal Kingdom 11
Humanity's Closest Zoological Relatives 15
Proto-hominoids 17
The Emergence of the Human Species 18
Culture: A Uniquely Human Condition 20
The Uniqueness of Humanity 32
- 3 SOCIALIZATION: BECOMING HUMAN 34
The Instinctualist Doctrine 35
A False Interpretation of Darwin's Theory 39
Human Sexuality: Is There a "Sex Instinct"? 43
The Behavioristic Doctrine 45
Mind, Self and Society 49
Freud's Theory of Repression 55
- 4 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION I: PRIMARY GROUPS AND OTHER MICROCOSMS 61
Primary Groups 63
The Primary Group as a Community 82

Contents

- 5 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION II: WHOLE SOCIETIES AND OTHER MACROCOSMS 85
 - The Problem of Order 85
 - Utilitarian Theories 88
 - From Mechanical to Organic Solidarity 90
 - Functionalism 94
 - The Marxian View of Social Organization
 - Introduction: Philosophical Foundations 99
 - The Marxian View of the Problem of Order 112
 - Bureaucracy 115
- 6 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION I: THE STUDY OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY 124
 - The Concept of Class 124
 - Changes in the Structure of Capitalism Since the Late Nineteenth Century 133
 - The Upper Class in Present-day Capitalist Society 135
 - The New Middle Class 139
 - The Working Class 143
 - Class Consciousness 147
 - The Underclass 149
- 7 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION II: OTHER APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY 153
 - The Functionalist Theory of Stratification 154
 - Conflict-Coercion Theory 159
 - Elites and Ruling Classes 163
 - The Ruling Class 167
- 8 ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE UNITED STATES 171
 - The Concepts of Race and Ethnic Group 171
 - Ethnic Immigration in Earlier Eras of American History 178
 - Later Immigration Patterns 179
 - Black Americans 182
 - Puerto Ricans 189
 - Mexican Americans 192
 - American Indians 199
- 9 THE FAMILY IN FLUX 206
 - The Nuclear Family 207
 - Monogamy and Polygamy 211
 - The Western Family: Glimpses of Its History 213

	Husbands and Wives: Is Marriage Good for Them?	216
	Interpreting Family Statistics	220
	Experiments with New Forms	223
10	RELIGION AND SOCIETY	227
	The Social Origins of Religious Phenomena	229
	Magic, Science and Religion	237
	Totem = Father = God	240
	Religion and Reason	243
	Religion as Alienation	244
	Religion and Socioeconomic Change	247
	The Secularization Thesis	254
11	SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR	261
	The Rise of Nazism in Germany	262
	The Chinese Communist Revolutionary Movement	275
	The American Civil Rights Movement	290
12	CRIME AND OTHER FORMS OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR	302
	Crime and Punishment	304
	A Sociological Theory of Criminal Behavior	307
	Anomie and Subcultures	311
	The Emergence of Subcultures	312
	Techniques of Neutralization: How Delinquents Rationalize Their Law Violations	314
	Crime and the American Underclass	316
	White-Collar Crimes	323
	A Note on Homosexuality as Social Deviance	328
13	CITIES THEN AND NOW: THE URBANIZING PROCESS	334
	The Earliest True Cities	337
	The Polis: The Greek City-State	338
	Medieval Cities and Towns	345
	The Beginnings of Capitalist Manufacturing	349
	Modern Cities	352
	From City to Suburb	355
	The Urban Crisis	358
14	SOCIAL CHANGE, MODERNIZATION, AND DEVELOPMENT	362
	Functionalist Theories of Social Evolution	364
	Classical Evolutionary Theories	365

Contents

Is Classical Marxism an Evolutionary Theory?	368
Modernization and Development: The Classical Cases	371
Capitalism, Colonialism, and Underdevelopment	373
15 THE DEVELOPED AND THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A PROGRAM FOR HUMAN SURVIVAL	384
The Second Industrial Revolution	387
The American Economy Falls Behind	389
Learning from Other Capitalist Countries: Japan and West Germany	392
Democratic Planning for the United States?	396
The Developing Countries	401
Abolishing Nuclear War	410
NOTES	417
SOURCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING	439
NAME INDEX	453
SUBJECT INDEX	457

THE SOCIAL
CONDITION
OF HUMANITY

Sociology: Its Scope and Central Concerns

If one were to ask the majority of sociologists to define the scope and substance of sociology in a few sentences, they most likely would reply in something like the following terms.

Sociology is a social science devoted to the study of human groups of all kinds and all sizes. A group may be defined as two or more interacting individuals. The interaction of individuals gives rise to a variety of social relations and social processes such as cooperation, competition, conflict, and domination. The full range of human behavior and relations is the subject matter of sociology.

We call sociology a *science* because our main intellectual aim is to comprehend and explain the workings of the social world. Like all sciences, sociology pursues truth and knowledge by employing methods of inquiry based on logic and evidence and by subjecting theories and findings to an ongoing critical examination.

However, the statement I have placed in the mouths of my colleagues tends to exaggerate their unity of outlook. The differences among sociologists are often as significant as their common ground. Some sociologists imitate the methods of the natural sciences and see themselves working in close parallel with physicists and chemists; other sociologists believe they share the aims of novelists and poets. Between those extremes there is a wide range of research methods, techniques, ideas, and just plain notions. Nevertheless, the several different sociologies do have something in common that may be called the sociological *perspective* or *approach*.

The Social Condition of Humanity

A The essentials of the sociological approach are best conveyed by introducing the student to the pioneers of sociological theory and analysis who wrote in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their works are now regarded as the classic tradition of sociological thinking because they have stood the test of time. We refer to these writings again and again; we rely on pioneers' theoretical ideas; we employ their concepts; we continue to investigate questions they raised; and, finally, we emulate their intellectual craftsmanship. In a word, the classic tradition provides the theoretical foundations of the sociological perspective.

In this introduction we cannot fully convey the intellectual riches of that tradition, nor can we dwell on the specific works and ideas of the thinkers who contributed to it. Those are among the tasks of this book as a whole. All we can do here is to provide a general idea of the tradition's significance.

Not all sociologists would agree on the thinkers to be included in the classic tradition. Some of my colleagues would have longer lists than others. However, most lists would have to include at least three of the masters who receive detailed consideration in this book: Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber. Although the names of these men are not likely to mean anything to the beginning student, I mention them here and postpone introducing them until the appropriate contexts in the following chapters.

The founders of the discipline which we today call sociology did not necessarily look upon themselves as professional sociologists. One finds in their writings an exploration of the full scope of the human condition. They freely availed themselves of the intellectual resources of anthropology, psychology, history, economics, and philosophy. Today those fields of study are distinct academic disciplines with jealously guarded borders. But for the classical sociological thinkers, academic boundaries were either nonexistent or quite fluid. They were more interested in addressing significant questions than in remaining faithful to this or that academic area.

It is therefore in the spirit of the classical tradition that sociology is conceived of and introduced in this book. Following in the footsteps of the pioneering masters, we shall try to focus attention on key questions. In the remainder of this introduction, I merely raise some of those questions in the hope that the student will agree on their importance and look forward to addressing them.

QUESTIONS ADDRESSED SOCIOLOGICALLY IN THIS BOOK

What are the similarities and differences between humans and other living creatures? It is true that human beings share many physiological characteristics with some other members of the animal kingdom. But is it not also true that the human possesses something *more* than they do? What does that "more" consist of?

A related issue is the nature of human nature. Is the human being driven by instincts, by internal, genetically determined biopsychic forces? Are humans innately aggressive, as Konrad Lorenz and other prestigious students of animal behavior have alleged? Or to take an opposing but equally influential view, are humans wholly determined by external, environmental factors? The psychologist B. F. Skinner, for example, has claimed that human beings are passive entities totally shaped by external stimuli. For Skinner and his followers, "autonomy," "will," "mind," "self," and other forms of consciousness are just so many illusions. Finally, there is the question raised anew in recent years by sociobiologists: How do the principles of human social organization compare with those on which animal societies are based?

As one shifts attention to large human organizations and societies, new theoretical problems emerge. How does a society establish and maintain order, that is, ensure a measure of internal peace that will enable its members to attend to their vital affairs? What is the connection between order and justice? That question was skillfully explored by the renowned French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who noted that modern industrial society is largely based on formal contractual relations. Contracts are often made between social unequals, where one party dominates and the other has no choice but to serve or to suffer worse consequences. Durkheim's reply, as we shall see, raises the critical question of whether a social order resting on basic social inequalities can be stable.

However, the social theorist who raised that question most dramatically was Karl Marx, the well-known nineteenth-century writer whose ideas have had so much political influence in the present century. Sociologists have increasingly recognized that Marx made significant contributions to sociological theory and analysis, especially for the study of social classes and social change. Though Marx and Marxism are highly controversial subjects, I shall try to discuss his work objectively, with the aim of highlighting his sociological contributions.

Social stratification is the term sociologists employ to describe the

study of inequalities based on wealth, power, prestige, and other social conditions. Key questions are: How do basic social inequalities come about? How are they perpetuated? Are modern societies still structured along social-class lines? Some sociologists favor a social-class type of analysis; others do not. Some sociologists believe that basic social inequalities can be reduced and even eliminated. Others insist on the necessity of social inequality, arguing that a society's social positions must be stratified and that the rights and duties associated with those positions must be unequal.

Similarly, some theorists hold that throughout history, from the dawn of civilization to the present, two classes of people have been evident: One that rules and another that is ruled. That state of affairs has prevailed whether government has been despotic, aristocratic, democratic, or what have you. Moreover, the division of society into rulers and ruled, those theorists maintain, is inevitable and bound to persist so long as there are human societies on earth. We shall subject several such theories to close scrutiny.

One very clear manifestation of social inequality is the status of ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities the world over have continued to suffer from a variety of disabilities, including prejudice, discrimination, segregation, exploitation, and persecution. The vastness of the subject constrains us to focus attention on minorities in the United States. Our analysis begins with a historical overview of ethnic immigration from the colonial era to the 1930s. A sound generalization may be made concerning all the European minorities that immigrated in the course of those three centuries: They eventually improved their economic circumstances considerably. However, the lot of the groups that arrived since the 1930s has been quite different. The major influx since the 1930s has consisted of Spanish-speaking minorities from Central and Latin America, people of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Spanish-speaking origins. The Mexican Americans are the most numerous group, and they also constitute the largest ethnic minority in the United States after black Americans. The vast majority of the Spanish-speaking people in the United States find themselves at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid or in what we call the *underclass*. They thus share economic circumstances similar to those of the majority of black Americans. Finally, American Indians, though native to the continent, are also among the most disadvantaged. It is therefore with good reason that we give several ethnic groups more sustained consideration than others.