

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

BY

WALTER GREENWOOD BEACH

Professor of Social Science, Stanford University

UNDER THE EDITORSHIP OF

WILLIAM F. OGBURN, PH.D.

Professor of Sociology, Columbia University



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TO MY WIFE
WITHOUT WHOSE CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT
THIS BOOK
COULD NOT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THERE are many excellent reasons why this book by Professor Beach will be welcomed. The scope of the subject-matter is rather more comprehensive than usual, including essential contributions to the study of society and its problems of economics, political science, psychology, education, and ethics. Such a treatment is needed, for it is becoming quite apparent that lines of demarcation between the special social sciences are unrealistic. There are few social problems to-day which can be understood without drawing upon contributions from various branches of the social sciences.

Such a treatment is needed also by the student who is getting his first introduction to sociology. He wants a broad picture of the whole before becoming immersed in the details. Witness, for instance, the growing popularity in our colleges and high schools of a single introductory course to all the social sciences.

The author's success in preparing a comprehensive introduction to sociology is due in part to his wide orientation and to his many years of experience as a teacher. His skill is shown by a rare simplicity and perspective that could only come from a broad and full understanding. The excellence of the organization of the materials is due not only to a wide familiarity with concrete, illustrative facts, but to a happy mingling of these facts with analysis and theory. By thus removing the arid stretches from his text, the author holds the interest of the non-specialist. Pervading the whole is a fine spirit, singularly free from prejudice, that must certainly lead the reader to a strong constructive interest in human betterment.

WILLIAM FIELDING OGBURN

PREFACE

THE increasing importance of social studies is strongly felt by all who have to do with education. The idea is more or less accepted that growing minds are bound to be interested in the relations of men with each other, and may be guided toward a more definite consciousness of these relations and of the mutual obligations involved in them. But it is still a problem to know how best to take advantage of this interest and how to guide it most effectively. The methods now used are of many kinds, showing little or no agreement as to what material should be presented to the beginning student.

The present book is, in part, an effort to meet this problem. The writer, after many years of teaching, believes that Sociology is perhaps the best approach to all the social sciences. Sociology has also a strong appeal to all types of mind through its direct bearing upon many of the critical problems of the present world.

The plan of the book is to present as simply and as concretely as possible the elements of sociological theory illustrated by social problems. Many theoretical questions have, therefore, been touched upon but briefly. Concrete social problems, however, are not developed independently, but in close relation to theoretical discussion.

The text has been designed throughout to meet the needs of introductory college classes. It has been used in outline form with successive classes in three institutions for a number of years. Much of its value has been due to the suggestions and stimulating questions and criticisms of my students. The "Questions" which follow each chapter are intended only as a few examples to be supplemented by the teacher.

The writer finds it difficult to make suitable acknowledgment for the help derived from sociological thinkers. My interest was first aroused by reading Giddings's *Principles*, and ever since I have con-

tinued to find great stimulus in his writings. Cooley and Ross, each in his own way, have been sources of constant and valued suggestion. Many others have been drawn upon, but it becomes impossible to remember the sources of very many of the opinions presented. In particular, I owe great thanks to Professor W. F. Ogburn, who has kindly read the entire manuscript and has given me the benefit of his wide knowledge and stimulating criticism.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Human association — Social inheritance — The fundamental facts of evolution — Community — The meaning of history in society.	

PART I. ELEMENTS: NATURE AND MAN

CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL NATURE AND ITS MODIFICATION	11
The influence of physical nature on society — Technique, or the modification of nature by man — Interrelation of economic activity and social organization.	

CHAPTER II

HUMAN NATURE: POPULATION DIFFERENCES	18
Distribution of the sexes — Varying age distribution — Differences in the marriage age — Difference in vitality — The size of populations — Social capillarity.	

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF MAN: CHARACTERISTICS	25
Human nature both inborn and acquired — Inborn beginnings — Instincts and their limitations — Function of inborn nature — Certain important instincts. Food and sex — Associative tendencies — Sympathy — Fear and flight — Anger and pugnacity — Curiosity and acquisition.	

CHAPTER IV

HUMAN NATURE: HEREDITY AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES	39
Variation in capacity and type of mind — Eugenics — Feeble-mindedness — Relation of feeble-mindedness to social problems — Measures of elimination — Insanity — Philanthropy and selection — Education and eugenic marriages.	

CHAPTER V

MARKS OF RACE	47
Intermingling of inborn and acquired traits — Physical marks of race — European sub-races — Slight difference between races in inborn capacity — The blood of the American people — The negro element — White race varieties — Problems of racial purity and inequality.	

CHAPTER VI

- ACQUIRED HUMAN NATURE 56
 Habit as socially developed human nature. Interstimulation —
 Habit and growth — Relation of habit to inborn nature — Typical
 habits as illustrations — Summary.

CHAPTER VII

- CERTAIN DEGENERATIVE HABITS 62
 Liquor habit and social welfare — Alcohol and degeneracy — The
 saloon problem — Methods of social control — The drug habit —
 The gambling habit.

CHAPTER VIII

- HABIT AS CULTURE 70
 The organized associative life or culture — The biological life-cycle.

PART II. THE BUILDING OF SOCIAL LIFE

CHAPTER IX

- COMMUNICATION 77
 Communication the basis of society — Forms of communication —
 Isolation and diffusion.

CHAPTER X

- MENTAL PROCESSES AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE 83
 Suggestion, imitation and sympathy — Influence as a social fact.

CHAPTER XI

- GROUP LIFE: VARIETIES AND TRAITS 88
 Groups vary in stability — Crowd characteristics — Primary and
 secondary groups.

CHAPTER XII

- HOW GROUPS ARE HELD TOGETHER 94
 "Force" or physical compulsion through punishment — Custom as
 the basis of social unity — The power of the social heritage — Con-
 tact of cultures lessens social differences — Origin of likeness and
 difference in social heritages — Social menace of the power of custom
 — Mores or standards — Historical values of great peoples.

CONTENTS

xi

CHAPTER XIII

CHANGE AND WHY IT COMES 106

Changes are both planned and unplanned. Why they occur — Migration and war — Invention — Fields of invention — Summary of causes of social change — Eras of change.

CHAPTER XIV

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES SUGGESTED BY THE FACTS OF CUSTOM AND CHANGE 114

Change is necessary for social welfare — Resistance to change — Social direction of change. Principles to be observed — Other possible factors in social unity.

CHAPTER XV

CONFLICT 120

Social values of conflict — Social evils of conflict — Domination and exploitation — Methods used in acquisitive conflict.

CHAPTER XVI

THREE IMPORTANT VARIETIES OR FIELDS OF CONFLICT 127

I. RACE CONFLICT OR THE CONFLICT OF COLOR. Why race differences lead to conflict — The negro problem — The negro in the United States — Possibilities of adjustment between white and black — Social aspects of the negro problem — Chinese and Japanese — The Chinese in the United States — The Japanese in the United States — Summary.

II. CONFLICT BETWEEN NATIONS. Evolution of conflict group units — Why conflict between nations is harmful.

III. CONFLICT BETWEEN CLASSES. The basis of class division — The assumed social function of private property — The effort to acquire property is not necessarily productive — Present criticism of existing ownership of wealth — Labor and capital as classes — The wage question — The question of the control of the processes of production — Struggle of labor to improve its position — Relation of class conflict to government and public opinion — Summary.

CHAPTER XVII

METHODS OF CONFLICT 159

I. WAR. Early war — Why modern war does not lead to progress — Illustrations from the Great War — Summary.

II. ECONOMIC COMPETITION. Monopoly and competition — Possible modification of evils of competition.

III. DISCUSSION. The organized use of discussion.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XVIII

Coöperation	170
Why coöperation takes place — Types and aims of coöperation — Methods and units of coöperation — Coöperation a continuous process — Summary of Part II.	

PART III. SOCIAL ORDER, SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AND SOCIAL CONTROL

CHAPTER XIX

The Character of Institutions	179
Institutions form the basis of the social order — Institutional relationships found in social evolution — Function of institutions.	

CHAPTER XX

Population and the Family	183
Family function and historical backgrounds — The modern family and its problems — Social values of normal family life — Modern conditions which react upon family values. Industry — Labor mobility a factor — Bad housing — The employment of women and children — New social contacts — The strength of the people — Problems of population quality — Education and income in relation to health — War and births — The declining birth rate in the Western World — Divorce and desertion — Change in the position of women — Moral aspects of divorce — Desertion — Changing economic and moral influences more fundamental than law — Freedom of woman — Women in industry — Relation to family welfare.	

CHAPTER XXI

The Family and Child Welfare	203
Dependence of family welfare upon community life — Facts which illustrate the problems of child welfare — Child health — Dependent children — Delinquent children — Social factors in delinquency — Community and family responsibility for prevention of delinquency — The juvenile court — Child labor — Modern industry creates a demand for child workers — Legal protection for children — Two causes of child labor — Child labor not of educational value — Harmful conditions of work — Standards suggested — Summary in regard to the family.	

CONTENTS

xiii

CHAPTER XXII

THE ECONOMIC ORDER 223

Production of wealth always a social fact — Function and problems of the economic order.

I. EVOLUTION IN ECONOMIC LIFE. Technique and social organization — Steps in development — Domestication of animals — Domestication of plants.

II. THE MODERN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION. The mechanical phase of the Industrial Revolution — Changes in the organization of business — Social consequences — The redistribution of population.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ECONOMIC ORDER (*continued*): MOVEMENTS OF POPULATION IN AMERICA — IMMIGRATION 236

Characteristics of American immigration — Causes of immigration — Race or blood mixture through immigration — Economic aspects of immigration — Social aspects of immigration — Immigration policy — The assimilation question. Relation to industry — Immigrant colonies — Agencies of assimilation — Levels of assimilation.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ECONOMIC ORDER (*continued*): REDISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION — COUNTRY AND CITY 252

The growth of cities — Causes of city growth.

I. RURAL LIFE AND ITS PROBLEMS. Modern science and increased capital used in agriculture — Agricultural economic problems — Social aspects of rural life — Possibilities of social betterment — Summary.

II. THE CITY AND ITS LIFE. City characteristics — Neglect of city-planning — Special city problems and community responsibility — City housing — City health and the social cost of sickness — Money cost of sickness — Relation of sickness to poverty — Sickness and human suffering — Remedies — City recreation — Recreation is social — Commercialized recreation — Relation of the level of recreation to industrial conditions — Social provision for city recreation — Concluding summary.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FUNCTION OF THE ECONOMIC ORDER 283

I. MACHINERY AND LABOR. Work and the mind of the worker.

II. CONCENTRATION OF OWNERSHIP.

III. CONFLICT BETWEEN CAPITAL AND LABOR. Effect of the industrial revolution upon the position of labor.

IV. POVERTY OF THE MASSES. The nature of poverty — Extent of poverty — Causes of poverty — Remedies suggested. Charity inadequate — Social minimum standards — Other proposals — Consequences of poverty.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE POLITICAL ORDER AND SOCIAL CONTROL 300

Social authority and social control — Origin of government — Relation of governmental development to changing economic life — Government and the making of public opinion — The problem of the control of the press — Law and freedom — Government and the lawless use of force — Law and individual obligation — Need of easy methods of changing law — Rights essential to democratic government — Government and industry — From regulation to administration — Lessening of governmental control in certain fields of life — The trend toward democracy — Limitations upon governmental control under autocratic rule may work badly in a democracy — Is democracy a failure? — The problem of equality — National and world political order — Crime and social control — Theories of punishment and prevention — Social conditions as a cause of crime — Heredity and crime — Degenerative habits as causes of crime — Punishment may increase crime — Improvement of education and social conditions essential.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MORAL ORDER AND SOCIAL CONTROL 324

Social control through standards of conduct — Social standards and values shape individual character — Traditional standards versus reflection — Variation in standards — What moral standards do — Building standards — Inner and outer control — Loyalty — Religion and morals. Stages of religious evolution — Religion becomes identified with social standards of morality — Moral idealism enforced by religion — Summary.

CHAPTER XXVIII

EDUCATION: SOCIAL CONTROL AND PROGRESS 335

Educability of man. Society an educational environment — Special educational institutions are necessary — The school and the development of knowledge — Transmitting the social heritage — The growth of knowledge — The school and its growth — What shall be taught — Vocational aims and difficulties — Education and social relations — Control of the school — Is educational opportunity really universal and adequate — Special schools and educational movements — The press and other educational means — Education and progress — Community surveys — Research bureaus — Coöperation and education.

CHAPTER XXIX

PROGRESS AND THE ELIMINATION OF SOCIAL EVILS 355

INDEX 359

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS



INTRODUCTION

PERHAPS never before in the history of the world has there been so great a need to understand the nature of human society. The growth of scientific knowledge has given to man an increasing control over nature, and the methods of scientific research now in use insure that knowledge will continue to advance, giving promise of limitless succession of discovery and invention. But in spite of the progress of scientific knowledge with its transformation of nature, the human world is a world of disorder, of strife and of great suffering. The life of men together, their relations one to another, the grouping of men in social units, and the relations of these units to each other, are by no means satisfactory, nor do these relations seem permanent and fixed. Men live in societies, and the character of these societies is itself a product of their life together, a human organization. At the same time the character of the social unit or group itself becomes a power in the formation of the life and nature of the men who are bound together in it. It is both natural and very wise, therefore, that so much of the best thought of our time is being directed to the study of society, in the hope and belief that only through an understanding of our social life can the advance in scientific knowledge really be made to serve the life of mankind. "We must let our minds play freely over all the conditions of life till we can either justify our civilization or change it."¹ The most difficult of all arts is the art of living together. The merest glance at the turmoil of the world to-day must suggest to any observer that this art is far from perfect, yet no one can doubt its vast importance. To understand how to build better relations among men, how to

¹ Wallas: *The Great Society*. p. 15.

enable human beings to live together in better and finer ways, is without question the greatest need of the present age.

Human association. To the student this art of living together presents two problems: first that of its ultimate purpose which concerns itself with the building of the best sort of society and secondly, that of its present status which concerns itself with the forms it takes, the forces that are at work in it, the changes which are taking place and the ways in which they arise. Sociology is thus a study of human relations, both of the forms they now take and of the processes by which they may be reconstructed. The kinds of social units which exist or have existed are very many and varied. But they are all alike in that they are types of association. Society is association, and it is only in association that human life is found.

Association is a mental fact; it refers to contact of minds. In every association or society or social group there is something in common between the individuals making the group, and it is because of this fact that they are able to make a society. List a number of kinds of societies and ask what it is which makes each a society. For example, to begin with a very inclusive society: 'Christianity' suggests a social unity, and the basis of this unity is a system of ideas, sentiments, beliefs, knowledge, which is shared to some extent by the various members of this widespread human society. So, to instance a very different social unit, an 'Employers' Association' suggests certain economic interests which are common to the various members; while a 'Trade Union' suggests a counter economic interest shared by laborers. An artist colony is made up of men whose similar intellectual interests and appreciation of the beautiful make them understand each other and enjoy each other's company. So families, friendship groups, churches, nations, corporations, historic eras constitute societies or social units, and each suggests that those who make it up have common interests, do things together, or are like each other in mind — factors which lead to mutual understanding.

Each social unit to which one belongs suggests some type of relationship between its members, and these relationships modify the lives of the individual members. In the family the relationship is that of affection, authority, and obedience, suggesting discipline

and self-sacrifice; in an athletic team the relationship is that of mutual support and recognition of leadership; on a cotton plantation in the South before the Civil War the community or social life was based on subordination and forced service — master and servant. Some relationships are made by government and are compulsory; others are ethical, expressing ideas of right and a consciousness of obligation; some suggest pleasure, while others involve suffering. It is these varied relationships which constitute the social atmosphere which influences and moulds the minds and characters of individuals. For while it is true that individuals make their societies, and so the quality of each society depends upon the type and character of individual life; equally is it true that the body of relationships which make up a society moulds the life of its members. Every society is an educating environment which determines the life of the individuals composing it.

Social inheritance. It is well to recognize, therefore, at the beginning of the study of the nature of society, the profound truth that “no man liveth unto himself.” In every group of people, whether it be savage or civilized, there grow up customs and fixed ways of acting and thinking. These have to do with the great and fundamental interests of mankind — work, play, knowledge, obligations, and worship — and they make up what we call the ‘civilization’ or ‘culture’ of the group. A child born in such a society or community not only inherits from his parents certain instincts and impulses to action, which are rooted in his physical organism; he becomes also a part of a social system or way of living, which is made up of a great variety of customs, usages, and laws. And these ways or customs of his society also become embedded in his nature until he thinks and acts as those about him. In this way he acquires new inheritance from his community, and while the instincts with which he is born determine his disposition and temperament, this *social* inheritance largely determines the kinds of acts and ideals he will approve and admire, and the ideas and beliefs he will hold to and act upon.

If one were to enumerate or describe the great discoveries of science, the great inventions in industry and the arts, the new ideas in politics, in religion, and in morals, he would be reciting the funda-

mental stages in the *social evolution* or evolution of community life, and he would be emphasizing the great law of group development. *For it is fundamentally true that the individual members of the community have not developed and do not develop except with and through the changes or evolution in the organized activities of the group.*

The fundamental facts of evolution. It is necessary in studying our social life to recognize that modern science has made us realize the great law of evolution which shows how life from its simplest to its highest forms is constantly undergoing modification. Three facts are fundamental to an understanding of this law. One is the fact of variation, which means that as species of life appear in the world they are found to vary somewhat, one from another, not being identical with each other. The second fact is that of selection. In a given environment or place of living one species is selected rather than another, because of the special qualities which give it an advantage as compared with others, and so enable it to survive. This is called the survival of the fittest or best adapted. The third fact is that of heredity or inheritance. Qualities found in the organism tend to be transmitted or handed on to its offspring, thus continuing the adaptation and permitting the species to survive in the given environment.

These facts explain the gradual development of special varieties of plant and animal life in different regions and places. It is the work of the biologist to study and explain these facts and to show their bearing upon all phases of life. In doing this he has made clear the idea of development, and we are more and more realizing how completely all phases of life are dominated by this idea. If, therefore, one wants to understand the life of the community, he must constantly bear in mind that change in it is inevitable and certain. If he were studying the inborn qualities which have developed in individuals and species, he would be studying the facts and conditions of biological evolution; but if he is studying the changing system of community life — its laws, customs, language, knowledge, and the like — he is studying the facts and conditions of social evolution. And just as in biological evolution there are the facts or laws of variation, heredity, and selection, so in social evolution there is variation, heredity, and selection. Social groups differ

from each other in customs, language, laws, and morals; between these varied customs and morals, selection is taking place, some of them being better adapted to existing group or community life than others; and those customs, morals, inventions, and laws, which are selected become a social inheritance, handed on in the group from age to age. Not that they are inherited at birth as the color of the hair or skin, but they become fixed in the minds of the members of the community as they advance from childhood to adult life, and one may truly be said to inherit them from the community life. And so communities survive, just as plant and animal species, because or in so far as their social life and activities — laws, knowledge, customs, arts, industries — are superior, in the sense of being better adapted for survival than those of other competing groups. Evidently the permanent welfare of every individual is closely dependent upon this social life, and it is vitally important for him to know and understand what are its characteristics, its points of strength and weakness, and the possibility of its improvement.

Community. It is apparent that each person belongs not only to one social group, but to many. And it is worth noting, also, that the more varied his interests are, the larger the number and kinds of groups to which he belongs. His relation to such groups should not be thought of as something formal, though at times this may be so, as when an alien becomes a naturalized citizen through a legal process, or a student is admitted to college upon examination or the presentation of proper credits. More often, however, the process is unperceived, and the individual may not realize this group relationship. An interest in the drama may make one a member of Shakespeare's company of players, as an interest in music may lead one into fellowship with a circle of composers or singers of to-day or of an earlier time. The vital point to observe is simply that men do not live in isolation, but always in contact with others; the unit of society is what may be called a companionship, a group whose contacts are mental. It is not primarily important that men occupy the same space, but it is important that they live and think and act in mental relationships, being conscious of each other, and so under the influence of their mutual life.

Because of the fact that group life is universal, every individual