

SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

BY

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To
Constance and Joan,
whose frequent interruptions
have delayed the appearance
of this book, and to their
Mother

PREFACE

During recent decades some significant movements have developed in the field of public education. One of the most important of these is the movement for the selection of satisfactory curricular material with a view to meeting the greatest social utility. Curricular revisions have been numerous. City and State departments of education, together with experimental schools, have been offering the products of their thought and experience in the realm of curricular revision. It remains for them, however, to adapt their material more closely than has been done to the demands of society and to the current functioning of society. With the purpose in mind of suggesting material for the curriculum as well as some principles of curriculum construction which may have some utility this volume is presented. While primarily a text in educational sociology for colleges, teachers' colleges and normal schools its use should be valuable also to the thousands of teachers who have never had any contacts with educational research, and to those teachers who have not had the opportunity to challenge much that now passes under the name of the course of study. However, it is not to be expected that the material in this volume will answer the many controversial questions which accompany problems of curriculum construction. It is hoped that it will open the way for challenging much of the material which has been used by the school—material which has been taught in subject fields because the binding force of tradition is infinitely stronger than any rational choice of subject matter.

While the author claims little originality for the material of this volume, nevertheless it is presented as the result of a decade of experience in teacher training institutions in which

the author has made an effort to make prospective teachers, within the limits of a brief course, see the relationships which exist between organized society and the practice of the teaching craft. That the process of education should simplify the environments for the child no one can question. That the school has done little to effect a mastery of the environments no thoughtful person doubts. This volume does not constitute a final statement of the case for the sociological objectives of education. Neither is it assumed that a restatement of these objectives, based on better and more complete information, should not be made, now or at some future time.

The first eight chapters of the text state some of the limits of Sociology as well as a general discussion of the relation of Sociology to Education. The remaining chapters are divided into six main themes of thought—each of which in itself might constitute an objective of education based on sociological principles. Some instructors may not want to use the material of the first four chapters. This has been included, in brief form to be sure, to serve as a background for those readers who have not done any previous work in Sociology.

An effort has been made to weave into the manuscript some of the significant patterns of social processes, with a view to making educational applications of them. An example of this might be cited in Chapter 19 where an attempt is made to apprise the reader of the significance of social mobility in constructing a curriculum. Similar reference might be made to Chapter 34 on the removal of isolation. Whether we conceive of the problem of selecting curricular materials on the basis of their utility under the name of educational sociology or under the name of a social philosophy of education is of little importance. If this volume helps teachers and prospective teachers to become more critical of the materials which the school has been teaching and more aware of the necessity of adapting curricular materials to social organization and to social change it will have served a portion of its purpose. Furthermore, the author is convinced that the

teacher, above all others, needs to experience the benefits of a liberalizing and socializing education. To the end of helping to achieve that purpose, questions, it is hoped of a thought-provoking nature, have been appended and references have been cited which should help the teacher to challenge and analyze much that now passes for contemporary civilization.

An effort has been made to select a wide range of reading material in the reading lists which accompany the various chapters. The standard books on Sociology have been utilized for this purpose, together with some of the more popular works of recent publication. In constructing the bibliographical lists at the conclusion of the chapters an effort has been made to proceed from the general to the particular, the thought being that the references would have value to the inexperienced reader somewhat in the order of their appearance in the list. Furthermore, an effort has been made to suggest a wide variety of magazine references which will be usable to those who have adequate library facilities for the understanding of some of the problems which have been suggested.

The author is indebted to several of his colleagues at the Illinois State Normal University for criticisms of portions of the manuscript within the fields of their special interests. I am especially indebted to my friend, Dr. Ray H. Abrams of the University of Pennsylvania, who has read all of Parts V and VII and has given some excellent criticisms. Professor George C. Atteberry of Crane Junior College, Chicago, has given some valuable criticisms on Part I. I am also indebted to Miss Irene Nordine, a student in the department of sociology, for having assisted in the preparation of the General Bibliography. To the many students who have been subjected to much of this material and who have assisted in compiling some of the original materials I am under an obligation for their critical estimate of it.

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PART I
THE SCOPE OF THE MATERIAL

CHAPTER 1

THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES

We are at the beginning of a scientific age. The factors which characterize the scientific method have been employed conspicuously for less than a century—maybe for no more than a half century of man's existence on the earth. While the process of fact finding was known among peoples whose civilization flourished several thousand years ago, nevertheless the scientific method, based on fact finding, has commenced to assume a place of marked importance only within the past century.

The Era of Philosophy.—While the nineteenth century has often been characterized as the century in which scientific endeavor had its inception, it is evident that the thought of the centuries preceding the last was dominated by philosophical solutions rather than by the use of scientific techniques. While the nineteenth century furnished some famous philosophers there can be no doubt that the eighteenth century was more dominantly philosophical than scientific. The advent of the scientific era of the last century, with its fact finding, furnished a substitute for the process of acquiring knowledge by reflection, which method is the philosophical. The philosophical approach is deductive in its method. It begins with premises which cannot be justified in all cases. From these premises the philosopher proceeds by argument and analogy to arrive at the logical destination, which, too often, is determined by the premises. The scientist, on the other hand, does not use reflection in the form of premises as his method. Instead he makes observations, presumably accurate and prop-

erly classifies them. From a combination of these observations he constructs his body of material and draws his conclusions. The scientist must, of course, use premises in the form of guesses which, in order to become a science, must be examined, tested and verified. Illustrative of this we might note that the astronomer must have some data on the movement of the planets and stars before he can make hypotheses on the existence of bodies then unknown. From the theory that many diseases are caused by germs the bacteriologist works at the job of isolating bacteria which may cause specific diseases. While he makes deductions from the general theory his technique is that of examining all of the data which seem to be significant with a view to determining the cause. The psychologist, on the theory that there is a big variation in the native ability of people, constructs tests, which, when applied, are supposed to give a fairly accurate measurement of the abilities of the people tested. The physicist, on the theory that certain physical phenomena are measurable, proceeds to devise techniques for measuring the speed with which light and sound travel, as well as the speed with which molecules move. The sociologist, proceeding on certain theories of aggregation, examines the location and the interaction of groups in metropolitan centers. Proceeding from the same theories the sociologist detects and charts areas of isolation, types of culture, the interplay of communities, changes in institutions, types of leadership, the influence of the physical and the social environments, as well as many other phenomena.

Briefly then, the philosopher is concerned with patterns of supposed behavior which are not based on evidence. The scientist is concerned with what is; the philosopher with what ought to be. The scientist is concerned with the observation and organization of significant data within a closely related field of interest. However, the work of the scientist is, to a large degree, dependent upon the work of the philosopher. This is especially true in the field of social science where the formulation of a program by the social philosopher must pre-

cede the scientist's work of examining and organizing the facts pertaining to the general pattern. In fact the worker in the modern field of social problems should, if he is to do efficient work, be both philosopher and scientist. Thus the work of Lester F. Ward, in emphasizing the possibilities of a scientific explanation of things helped to pave the way for doing scientific studies in society. The aggregation theories of Giddings and of Ratzenhofer served as a basis in modern times for the community studies, both urban and rural, which have been made. Briefly, we may conclude that in the field of social science the philosopher suggests patterns of behavior while the scientist examines the theories for substantiation. It is doubtless true that the worker in the field of social science must be both philosopher and scientist—philosopher in being able to detect the trends of development, and scientist in that he must be able to gather data and then classify and verify it. The interaction of philosophy and science upon each other is well expressed by Dewey¹ when he writes that

“Preoccupation with attaining some direct end or practical utility, always limits scientific inquiry. For it restricts the field of attention and thought, since we note only those things that are immediately connected with what we want to do or get at the moment. Science signifies that we carry our observations and thinking further afield and become interested in what happens on its own account. Theory is in the end, the most practical of all things, because this widening of the range of attention beyond nearby purpose and desire eventually results in the creation of wider and farther-reaching purposes and enables us to use a much wider and deeper range of conditions and means than were expressed in the observation of primitive, practical purposes.”

Origin of the Scientific Method.—For some particular reasons the scientific era came upon western civilization during the middle of the nineteenth century. Its arrival at this time was induced by several factors. The tremendous development of machines, known as the Industrial Revolution, in bringing people together in cities, and in thereby creating

¹ *The Sources of a Science of Education*, p. 17.

problems and in encouraging inquiry, contributed somewhat to the development of the scientific method. The accumulated scientific knowledge, meager as it was, was enhanced by the extensive circulation of books, by the more general use of the microscope, by the extensive use of steel as well as by other accomplishments.

The middle of the nineteenth century produced several people who were to create intellectual revolutions in their fields of activity. Among these was Charles Darwin, whose rather extensive observations for his day constituted the basis for his treatises on the *Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*. While the theories of Darwin were later shown to be erroneous in some of their conclusions, nevertheless their value lies in the fact that they constituted a challenge to the orthodox beliefs concerning man's creation and development. If these treatises did not answer the questions concerning the origin of man, they certainly challenged the untenable and irrational judgments then existing concerning man's origin. At the time that Darwin was proposing his theories concerning the origin of man, Karl Marx, in *Das Kapital*, was examining the existing economic system, largely by using fact finding methods, with a view to offering a solution to the economic problems created by the industrial system. Contemporaneous with Darwin and Marx was Pasteur, working in the field of bacteriology, who, by observations, pointed the way to the control of harmful bacteria, thereby rendering man capable of controlling an additional phase of his physical environment. There is no doubt that the work of these three men opened the way for the extensive and scholarly investigations which have followed in these as well as in other allied fields. They were pace makers and their work constituted the basic stimulus for much of the scientific investigation that characterized the close of the last century.

Science vs. Accuracy.—While science consists largely of accurate observations there is always a danger of confusing accuracy with science. In other words there is the possibility

of emphasizing the importance of meticulous recordings at the expense of determining trends and developments. In the field of social case work danger of this kind arises from the inadequate diagnosis of the facts recorded. In American political life too little attention is given to explaining causes, trends and movements which are reflected in election results. Certainly it is true that the school has not attempted to any considerable degree any solution of problems which might be framed from carefully prepared reports of the census. Too often the untrained student becomes impressed by unrefined social statistics. Examples of this are numerous.

Another aspect of this relation between science and accuracy should receive our consideration. That is the tendency for the uninitiated in the field of social science to draw unwarranted conclusions. In criminal statistics some of the untrained may think that we have significant data when we count the number of negroes and whites, the foreign born, the children of foreign born and the native whites who have committed crimes. However accurately this record may be made it is true that observations of this kind are, in the logician's language, *non-sequiturs*. They are the product of the common fallacy in which selection is made of obviously observable conditions and in which designation is made of one as the cause and of the other as the effect. Inquiries of this nature emphasize the small percentages of delinquents who attend Sunday School, who are Boy Scouts or who suffer from no physical defects. A complete and therefore an accurate case study of delinquents would doubtless show a wide variety of combinations of factors which contribute to delinquency. The untrained observer fails to recognize that participation in such activities as Sunday School and the Boy Scouts, together with the possession of a certain quality of physical health, are largely dependent upon the income of the family and the intelligence and skill of the parents and teachers in directing the activities of the child. The presence of "prosperity" is attributed to the tariff, the standards of

modern conduct are caused by the automobile, the efforts for public ownership emanate from Russia—these and scores of similar conclusions are known in the classifications of the logician as illustrations of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. The line of logic consists of concluding that because a circumstance follows a condition that it is caused by it. The untrained student is likely to interpret all sequences of events as causative. It is doubtless true that one of the chief functions of the school ought to consist of teaching boys and girls to detect causes of social conditions that exist. To accomplish that, if it is possible, is to make people scientifically minded. It is quite obvious that the scientific point of view can be taught in other classes than those of the biological or physical sciences. *The scientific viewpoint should be the objective of every subject field.*

Science vs. Religion.—The student of society recognizes that the gods are a creation of man, for if it were not so, we would not have the variety of gods that exist among the various peoples. The gods represent the inexplicable. Man goes as far as his information on visible and tangible matter will allow. When man is unable to offer a satisfactory explanation of certain phenomena he attributes the peculiar action to the power of the gods. Groups of people who have effected only a slight control over their environment will rely upon the power of the gods to a greater degree than will those groups whose members have succeeded in establishing more extensive controls.

As a result of this condition the gods of a group of people are deprived of some of their power on each occasion that an addition is made to the group's body of scientific data. People who are unacquainted with the causes of diseases are likely to attribute illness to the evil spirits. The uninitiated into the realm of mental disorders are disposed to look upon mental sickness as the result of the power of the demons. The unscientifically minded look upon crop failures as the work of the unkind gods. Climatologists can give us some

reasons for the conditions of the weather; less advanced people believe that the gods control these phenomena and consequently rely upon the prayers and incantations of the group for relief from drought. Modern medical practice relies upon the fact that many disease germs have been isolated; those unacquainted with such techniques rely upon the functioning of the evil spirits as an explanation of causes.

The question of the conflict between science and religion has been discussed at great length by persons who are not eager to make adjustments to the teachings of the scientific age. If religion is basically a body of beliefs, rather than a program of action, it will follow that science and religion will conflict, especially in those aspects of religion in which there is a failure to adapt the teachings of the religious group to the body of scientific knowledge which has been established. Truth, whether scientific or inspirational, must be consistent with the facts of the laboratory and of the temple. The refusal of the religious teachers to recognize the facts of science and to adapt their programs to these facts is for the church to refuse recognition to some of the essential societal facts.

The Good and the Bad.—The social scientist is not primarily concerned with making a determination of the good and the bad. In fact the social scientist, in his most detached attitude, is not concerned with moral values except as those values are expressed in the folkways of the group. Instead of looking for the good and the bad, or the moral and the immoral, the social scientist, like the workers in all fields of science, looks for causes of group behavior. The scientist recognizes that the good and the bad vary with groups. The good consists of those acts which are approved by the group; the bad of those acts disapproved. Since groups vary widely in the acts that are sanctioned it naturally follows that conclusions on the good and the bad, without any identification of the group from which the conduct flows, are utterly unscientific. An example of this can be found in the opinion