

# SOCIOLOGY: ITS PROBLEMS AND ITS RELATIONS <sup>1</sup>

## I

### DEFINITIONS OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIETY

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*Definitions of sociology.*—As sociology is a new science and has not yet received a definite form, it is not to be wondered at that there are a number of different conceptions of the science and no universal agreement as to its definition. While this disagreement among sociologists themselves as to the conception and definition of their science is now far less than formerly, still it is necessary to point out to the student at the outset the existing conflict of opinion. Through comparison of definitions more or less faulty, moreover, we may hope to reach an approximately correct definition. Of course no ultimate definition of sociology will be attempted, as that can only be formulated when the final stages of the development of the science have been reached. We are concerned only with the working or tentative definition, such as every scientific worker must have in order to delimit his problems clearly from those of other sciences. There are at least six leading conceptions or definitions of sociology:

1. Perhaps the most common conception of sociology is that it is a science which treats of social evils and their remedies. This is indeed the popular conception of the science, but it has few or no supporters among sociologists themselves. Sociology deals with the normal rather than the abnormal in the social life. It is true that sociology deals to some extent with social evils, but it deals with them as incidents in normal social evolution rather than as its specific problems. Again this definition is open to criticism in that it confounds sociology with

<sup>1</sup> This paper constitutes the first four chapters of a text in sociology which Professor Ellwood has in preparation.—EDITOR.

scientific philanthropy, which is an applied science resting upon sociology and other social sciences. This conception of sociology must, accordingly, be pronounced erroneous.

2. A second definition of sociology which is often heard is that it is the science of society or of social phenomena. This conception of sociology is current among many scientific men, but it must be criticized as too broad and too vague. There are other sciences of society or of social phenomena than sociology. Economics and politics deal not less truly with social phenomena than sociology. If "the scientific treatment of any social phenomenon" is sociology, as an eminent authority has recently declared,<sup>2</sup> then it is difficult to see how there is any place left for the special social sciences. It would be difficult to see, for example, why the scientific treatment of trade and markets would not fall within the scope of sociology, rather than of economics. Such a definition would make sociology include all the special social sciences; it would make it, in effect, but a name for the totality or encyclopedia of the social sciences. In any case it is too vague to satisfy the requirements of a working-definition of a science. It may be noted in passing, however, that there is no objection to using sociology as an encyclopedic term for all the social sciences in some connections, such as classifications of the sciences, library classifications, philosophic summaries of knowledge, and the like.

3. Another definition of sociology is that it is the science of the phenomena of sociability. This definition has grown out of a narrow interpretation of the word "social" as used in the definition last given. It is evident that if the second definition is much too broad, this latter is much too narrow. The sympathetic or altruistic phenomena of society which are brought together under the term "sociability," though very important, are only one aspect of our social life. A science which treats of the phenomena of sociability could not be a general science of society, but only another special social science, co-ordinate with such sciences as economics and politics. Such a definition of sociology is usually not found explicitly stated in sociological texts, but

<sup>2</sup> Westermarck, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. X, p. 684.

it is often implicit in sociological theories, and needs to be noted as a type of definition of sociology.

4. A fourth type of definition of sociology is that which makes it "the science of human institutions." Under this head must be included Professor Ward's conception of sociology as "the science of human achievement,"<sup>3</sup> although he uses achievement in a somewhat wider sense than the word "institutions" is generally used. While this definition indicates many of the most important problems which the sociologist investigates, and so in a general way marks off the field of sociology, yet it is open to criticism as being at once too broad and too narrow. It is too broad, because the special social sciences also deal with human institutions, though in a specific rather than in a general way. Thus politics deals with the origin, development, and workings of political institutions. But the chief objection to this definition of sociology is that it is too narrow. It leaves out of account all the ephemeral and transitory phenomena of society, such as mobs, crazes, fads, fashions, and crimes, all of which are important phenomena for the sociologist to understand.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it leaves out of consideration also the many instinctive activities connected with nutrition, reproduction, and defense against enemies, which human societies exhibit in common with animal societies, and which constitute no inconsiderable part of the everyday social life of a people.

5. A fifth type of definition of sociology is that which makes it the science of the order or organization of society. Under this class comes Professor Simmel's definition of sociology as "the science of the *forms* or *modes* of association."<sup>5</sup> To this type also belong such definitions as "sociology is the science of social relations;" for in this case the problem emphasized is that of the organization of society. Now the problems of the organization of society, of the relations of individuals to one another in the social order, are undoubtedly among the most important problems of sociology; and much of the best sociological literature of the present is occupied with the

<sup>3</sup> Ward, *Pure Sociology*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> See Ross, *The Foundations of Sociology*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> See *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. II, p. 167.

discussion of these problems. This definition is good, then, as far as it goes; but modern science no longer throws the emphasis upon the static aspect of things, but rather upon change, development, evolution. A definition of sociology, accordingly, which makes it the science of social organization, is open to the objection that it neglects the most important problems of sociology, namely, the problems of social evolution.

6. A working definition of sociology may, then, be tentatively formulated as follows: *Sociology is the science of the organization and evolution of society.* This definition has the advantage of indicating at once the problems with which the sociologist deals, namely, problems of the organization, or order, of society, on the one hand, and problems of the evolution, or progress, of society, on the other. It meets, therefore, the requirements of a working definition of our science, in that it clearly delimits the problems of sociology from the problems of related sciences. It is worthy of note that this definition is very nearly that which Auguste Comte, the father of modern sociology, proposed, namely, "the science of the order and progress of society."<sup>6</sup> The words "organization" and "evolution" are, however, broader terms than "order" and "progress," and are therefore preferable. "Order" connotes a stable, settled, and harmonious condition of the elements of society; while "organization" means any arrangement of the parts of society with reference to each other. Social organization is practically synonymous with social structure. "Progress" means advancement, change for the better; while "evolution" in the broad sense in which it is here used, comprehends change of every sort, whether for the better or the worse.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Positive Philosophy*, Book VI, chap. iii.

<sup>7</sup> Of course, many other correct definitions of sociology might be formulated. The above definition we adopt simply because it serves to delimit clearly the problems of sociology from those of nearly allied sciences. As examples of others equally correct might be cited Professor Giddings' definition (*Principles of Sociology*, p. 5): "Sociology is an attempt to account for the origin, growth, structure, and activities of society by the operation of physical, vital, and psychological causes working together in a process of evolution;" and also Professor Small's definition (*General Sociology*, p. 35): "Sociology is the science of the social process"—provided, of course, that we understand by "the social process" the *whole* process of social growth, development, and interaction, not one aspect of the process, such as the economic.

*Definitions of society.*—Our definition of sociology is still very far from clear until we define society. Unfortunately the conceptions of society are as varied as the conceptions of sociology. Indeed, it may be doubted whether the word “society” is capable of exact scientific definition.<sup>8</sup> In defining it, there is all the difficulty of giving a loose popular term, which is continually shifting in its meaning a definite scientific content. The real fact which the sociologist is trying to get at is better expressed by the word “association.” Our use of the word “society” in the definition of sociology is, therefore, merely provisional. But in the historical development of sociology the word has been used, and it seems best to continue its usage on that account, pointing out to the student its varied meanings in sociological literature. We must note the chief of these:

1. A majority of the older sociologists used the word society as practically synonymous with the word nation. A society in their minds was “a body of people politically organized into an independent government,” i. e., a nation. These sociologists have been called, not inaptly, “the national sociologists.” No sociologist of the present would defend such a confusion of terms as this must be admitted to be. But the nation, as the most imposing social structure, legitimately occupies a central place in the sociologist’s thought.

2. Another definition of society, proposed by those who have seen the impossibility of limiting the concept of society to the national group, is that “a society is all that group of people that have a common civilization,” or “who are the bearers of a certain type of culture.” A society, according to this conception, might be much more extensive than a nation, but could hardly be smaller. But if the confusing of society with the nation must be criticized as unduly limiting the concept of society and the work of the sociologist, much more must the confusing of society with the cultural group be criticized for the same reason. Such an arbitrary limitation upon the meaning of a term could scarcely be justified upon grounds of scientific necessity. It would be far better to take the term society with all the breadth

<sup>8</sup> See Small, *General Sociology*, pp. 183, 184.

and variety of meaning which popular usage has given it, and try to give it a scientific content by finding a common element in its varying usages. All recent attempts at the definition of society have been directed to this end.

3. As an example of such definition we might cite the definition of society proposed by Professor Fairbanks: "Any group of men who are bound together in relations more or less permanent."<sup>9</sup> This is substantially a correct definition of the term society as it is used in a concrete sense by most sociologists of today. It is, however, somewhat vague as to what sort of relations constitute a society. It fails to specify that these relations are not those of mere contiguity in time and space, but are those of *psychical interaction*.

4. Any group of interacting individuals, we may say roughly, then, constitutes a society. But this definition must be qualified in at least two respects to give it scientific precision. In the first place we do not usually speak of individuals of different species as constituting a society. We regard a society as made up of individuals of the same species; and this limitation of the concept is convenient, and even necessary from a scientific point of view. To this extent Professor Giddings is undoubtedly right in insisting that similarity, resemblance, both physical and psychical, is the basis of society.<sup>10</sup> Without at least the amount of resemblance which is found among individuals of the same species, society, in the scientific meaning of the word, is impossible. When we speak of individuals as the constituent units of society, therefore, we assume that they are individuals of the same species.

In the second place we do not think of the individuals of a group as constituting a society unless they are *psychically* interdependent. Mere physiological interdependence is not sufficient to constitute a society. When we speak of groups of plants or other low organisms as constituting "societies" it is probable that we are using the term metaphorically, or else attributing to them some degree of psychic life. If we accept these two qualifications

<sup>9</sup> Fairbanks, *Introduction to Sociology*, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Giddings, *Elements of Sociology*, chaps. i, vi, and vii.

a correct definition of society in the concrete sense would be *any group of psychically interacting individuals of the same species*.

It may be asked if another qualification should not be added to our definition, namely, that the individuals of the group be friendly disposed toward one another. But it is evident that hostility may exist among the members of a group and that it may be but a phase of their social life. Indeed, conflict between individuals usually arises because of their social relations (psychical interactions), not because they are socially unrelated. The concept of society cannot, then, be regarded as implying exclusively friendly relations. However, the prevailing relations between the members of a group are friendly, and conflict may be regarded as a sort of negative and destructive element in the total life of the group. Practically, therefore, the internal conflicts of a group may be disregarded in a constructive view of its life-history. Ultimately all the members of a group work together in the carrying-on of a common life-process. In this sense they may be said to co-operate. If we mean by co-operation nothing more than this living together and working together in a common life, we shall be substantially correct if we define society as *any group of individuals who either unconsciously (instinctively) or consciously (reflectively) co-operate*.<sup>11</sup>

Thus a society may be constituted as readily by two or three individuals as by a million. The only criterion by which we may decide whether any group constitutes a society or not is its possession or non-possession of the essential mark of a society, namely, *the functional interdependence of its members on the psychical side*. According to this view a family and a nation, a debating club and a civilization, are equally entitled to the appellation of society, and to be objects of the sociologist's investigation. As Stuckenberg has put it,

Society is created whenever men pass from isolation to a relation of co-operation or antagonism, of mutuality and reciprocity; whenever they affect each other as stimuli. . . . Society [is] constituted by the mental interaction of individuals, *that is the essential idea*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Compare Professor Giddings' definition of animal society in his *Inductive Sociology*, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> The first writer to define society as essentially an interaction of individuals (and so as a process), so far as I can discover, was Professor Simmel, of the

It is evident that society is but a broad term standing for the psychical interactions of individuals. It is practically a verbal noun, that is, it is the name of a process, and but little narrower than the abstract term "association." When used abstractly, indeed, it is synonymous with this latter term, meaning the interaction of individuals. It is frequently convenient to use the word society in an abstract sense and when so used in this book it will mean "the reciprocal interactions of individuals." Substituting this phrase in our definition of sociology we get the following: *Sociology is the science of the organization and evolution of the reciprocal interactions of individuals.*

Even this definition, the reader must be warned, like all formal definitions, falls far short of presenting an adequate conception of sociology. Such a conception we hope, however, can be gained from a perusal of the following pages. We hope to show that what the sociologist is interested in is not so much the organizations and institutions of society as the associational processes which lie back of these, the processes of individual interaction which constitute them;<sup>13</sup> and that sociology, in seeking such a fundamental view of the social life, necessarily becomes a biology and psychology of these associational processes.

*Definition of social.*—Much confusion has been introduced into sociological discussions through the lax use of the word "social." The same writer not infrequently uses it in three or four different senses, shifting from one meaning to another without warning to the reader. Of course, when this adjective is properly used, it should correspond in meaning to the word society, signifying, "of, pertaining to, relating to, society." In accordance with our definition of society, therefore, the word social means "that which relates to, pertains to, the interactions of individuals." In other words, *the social is that which involves the interaction of*

University of Berlin (see his *Sociale Differenzierung*, pp. 12-20). In the work of Stuckenbergh from which the above quotation was taken (*Sociology: The Science of Human Society*) the idea is expanded through several pages (Vol. I, pp. 80-102). Professor Small (*General Sociology*, chap. i) and Professor Hayes (*American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. X, pp. 750-765) have so developed and emphasized this idea that it must now be regarded as a postulate for sociology.

<sup>13</sup> See Professor Hayes's article on "Sociology a Study of Processes," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. X, pp. 750-765.



*two or more individuals.* *Social phenomena* are, accordingly, as Professor Ross says in effect, "all phenomena which we cannot explain without bringing in the action of one individual upon another."<sup>14</sup>

"Social," then, is a comprehensive term including the economic, political, moral, religious, educational, and other phenomena arising from the interactions of individuals. The economic, political, etc., is not to be distinguished from the social, save as one aspect or phase of the social. Economic and political problems, for example, are at the same time social problems; but not all social problems are economic or political problems. Social problems are economic, political, moral, religious, educational, etc., problems or problems which involve several or all of these aspects of the social life—problems, in other words, which are wider and deeper than any single phase of society. It is this latter class of problems which particularly deserve to be spoken of as sociological problems; but these we shall discuss later.

Unfortunately the word social is not used popularly in the strict scientific way in which we have defined it, but is used with a variety of loose meanings attached to it. It is especially used as nearly synonymous with the word "sociable." The scientific student of society, however, has little excuse for using the word in a loose sense. He can always find some other word, or make use of some qualifying phrase, when it is necessary to express a narrower idea than that which logically attaches itself to the word "social" from its connection with the term "society."<sup>15</sup>

*Animal societies.*—It will be noticed that in the definitions of sociology, society, and social, we have avoided the use of the words "man," "human being," "humanity," and the like. This is because there are animal groups from which we cannot well

<sup>14</sup> *Foundations of Sociology*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Because of the narrow meaning often given to the word "social," several writers have proposed other adjectives, such as "societal" and "societary," to mean "of, or pertaining to, society." But there is no good reason why the word "social" should not be given in the social sciences this broad meaning, which, as we have already said, logically attaches to it; and such is rapidly becoming the best scientific usage.

withhold the name of "societies," because they have all the characteristics of societies as we have described them. Such, for example, are the groups formed by the so-called "social insects," the ants, bees, and wasps, and the groups formed by many birds and mammals. Objectively and even subjectively, so far as we can see, these groups conform to the definition of society which we have accepted. While there are vast differences between these animal societies and human societies, these differences are specific, and not generic. The theory of evolution has broken down the wall which so long separated the human from the animal world, and no longer permits us to regard human nature and human inter-relations as something altogether peculiar and isolated. It is, in fact, impossible to define society in such a way as to include all human groups and *only* human groups, without resort to some arbitrary procedure. The fact of society is wider, then, than the fact of humanity.

The question arises, therefore, whether sociology should take account of animal groups as well as of human groups. If we assume the evolution of the human from the sub-human there can be only one answer to this question: Sociology must take animal societies into account. Just as psychology cannot stop with the study of the human mind, but goes on to study the manifestations of mental life even in the lowest animal forms in order to throw light upon the nature of mind; so sociology cannot stop with the study of human interactions, but must go on to study the lowest type of psychical interactions found among animal forms, in order to throw light upon the nature of society.

But it must be admitted that the psychologist's interest in the mental life of animals is prompted by his desire to explain the mental life of man. So, too, the sociologist's interest in animal societies is prompted solely by his desire to explain human societies. In each case the human remains the center of interest. But because we believe that we cannot understand a thing unless we understand it in its genesis, and because we believe, furthermore, that the origin of nearly all important elements in human nature is to be found below the human line, we are forced to study animal mental and social life in order to understand fully

the social life of man. Sociology is, therefore, essentially a human science; and its comparative chapters form but a brief introduction to its treatment of human problems. It would be substantially correct to define sociology in human terms—as *the science of the organization and evolution of human societies*, were it not that some sociologists have denied that sociology has any comparative chapters; that animal association can throw any light upon human association. The elementary considerations on modern scientific method which we have here introduced are sufficient to refute this position; and to establish the proposition that sociology, though distinctively a human science, must take into account at every step the facts of the animal life below man.

## II

### THE SUBJECT-MATTER AND PROBLEMS OF SOCIOLOGY

*The subject-matter of sociology.*—Considerable controversy has existed over the question as to whether sociology has an independent subject-matter or not. It is evident from our definition of sociology, however, that its subject-matter is the same as that of all the social sciences. The only difference between the subject-matter of sociology and a special social science, like economics, for example, is that sociology takes the whole field of social phenomena for its subject-matter while economics takes only one section or phase of social phenomena, namely, the industrial phase. In the same way biology or physics has no distinctive subject-matter apart from the specialisms which exist under them. Sociology, then, like all general sciences, has no distinctive subject-matter of its own. This is true, however, more or less of all sciences. The distinction between the sciences is not one of subject-matter, but of problems. The same subject-matter may be investigated by several sciences, but always from different points of view, that is, with reference to different problems. Thus a movement of the human body may be investigated with reference to certain problems by the physiologist, and with reference to quite different problems by the psychologist. The truth is that there are no hard and fast lines in nature upon which to base the divisions between the sciences. The present

divisions have grown up as a result of the division of labor between scientific investigators and are largely matters of convenience. That is, they are largely teleological divisions, based upon the different problems before the minds of different investigators.

The subject-matter of sociology is, then, social phenomena, in the broad sense in which that term has been defined; or as Professor Small has somewhat more happily phrased it, "the process of human association."<sup>16</sup> The sociologist considers this process as a whole, in its totality, and especially in its more fundamental aspects; while the students of the special social sciences study special phases of the same process. Thus the same objective social fact, say the French Revolution, may serve as scientific material for the sociologist, the economist, the political scientist, and many other investigators.

*The unit of investigation in sociology* is a topic which has occasioned considerable discussion among sociologists. It is not apparent, however, that a science must have but one unit of investigation,<sup>17</sup> and the outcome of the discussion has been to indicate a number of units of investigation which may be used. Among the more important of these are: (1) the *socius*, or associated individual, the member of society, the unit out of which all the simpler social groups are composed: (2) the *group* of associated individuals, whether the groups are natural, genetic groups, or artificial, functional groups; (3) the *institution*, which we may here define as a grouping or relation of individuals that is accepted, usually expressly sanctioned, by a society.

It is evident that all of these units, and many more, may be employed by the sociologist in investigating social organization and evolution. The object of the sociologist's attention is always, however, as Professor Hayes has demonstrated, *the associational process*, that is, the psychical interactions of individuals.<sup>18</sup> Some phase of the social process is, then, always the real unit of sociological investigation. It may be communication, sugges-

<sup>16</sup> *General Sociology*, chap. i.

<sup>17</sup> Compare Ross, *The Foundations of Sociology*, pp. 85-99.

<sup>18</sup> See *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. X, pp. 750-765.

tion, imitation, competition, co-operation, or any one of the many minor processes which go to make up the whole process of social organization and evolution. It is these *processes of individual interaction* and their many complications which the sociologist investigates and is bent on explaining. As soon as he shifts his attention from the interactions between individuals to the individual himself, he is no longer a sociologist, but a psychologist or a biologist, for the object of his attention is then either the states of consciousness of the individual or his physical characteristics. The *socius* can, then, be a "unit of investigation" in sociology only in so far as he is considered a functional element in the associational process.

*The problems of sociology.*—Our definition of sociology has already indicated that the problems of sociology fall into two great classes: (1) problems of the organization<sup>19</sup> of society, and (2) problems of the evolution of society.

The problems of the organization of society are problems of the relations of individuals to one another, and to institutions and of institutions to one another. Ultimately all these problems reduce themselves to the problem of the types of interaction found among the individuals of a given group at any given time. Specifically, such problems are, for example, the nature of the forces which draw and hold men together in certain forms of association; the various forms or modes of association; the influence of various elements in human nature upon the social order; the influence of physical factors upon the constitution of a society; how men act in groups or co-operate; how ideals, standards, public sentiment, and the like dominate the individual and shape social activities; in short, how all forces or influences

<sup>19</sup> It must be admitted that the word "organization" is not exactly a happy one, since, as the problems mentioned indicate, it is meant to cover both the "structural" and "functional" aspects of society. If, however, it be remembered that in sociology we are dealing always with processes, not with fixed structures, it will be seen that an organization or co-ordination of processes is what is essentially involved in both the so-called structural and functional aspects of society. Organization, in this broad sense of social co-ordination, then, may be used to cover all problems of a hypothetically stationary society.

No attempt is made in this section to give a full list of the problems with which sociology deals. It is attempted only to show that all the problems of pure

operate to give a society a certain form or arrangement at any given moment. The problems of social organization, then, are problems of a hypothetically stationary society. They are such problems as arise from studying society in cross-section, as it were, when no question as to changes in society is raised. For this reason Comte called the division of sociology which deals with such problems "social statics;" many recent sociologists would prefer to call it "social structure."

The problems of the evolution of society are problems of the changes in the type of social organization; that is, in the type of individual interactions. Under this head comes the important problem of the origin of society in general—that is, of psychic group-life—and of human society in particular. But aside from the problem of origin, the problems of social evolution are mainly two, namely, the causes of social progress, that is, advancement toward a higher, more complex type of social organization; and the causes of social decline or degeneration, that is, reversion to lower and simpler forms of organization. The former problem is, of course, the more important of the two, the latter being merely its negative aspect. Indeed, the problem of social progress is, perhaps, the central problem of sociology, the one to which all other problems lead up. Hence the chief purpose of sociology may be said to be to develop a scientific theory of social progress. The study of social evolution, then—that is, of the factors which produce social changes of all sorts, from those of fashions to great industrial and political revolutions—is the vital part of sociology. The problems of change, development, in society are evidently problems of movement. Hence Comte proposed that this division of society be called social dynamics, as "dynamics" in his time was the name of that part of physics which dealt with

sociology may be classified under one of two heads: (1) social organization (in the broad sense explained above); (2) social evolution. A careful survey of the problems dealt with by modern sociologists will show that they can all readily be classified under one or the other of these two headings, save, perhaps, problems in social ethics, which, as I shall show later, do not belong in pure sociology. Other classifications of sociological problems are of course possible, and may be easily reconciled with this most fundamental classification; as e. g., the classification into biological problems and psychological problems.

the laws of motion. Recent sociologists usually call this part of sociology genetic sociology, or simply social evolution.

*Static and dynamic sociology.*—Shall we, then, preserve the old distinction between static and dynamic sociology? It is worthy of note that even Comte, who made this distinction, said that he made it merely for purposes of scientific analysis, and that it must not be considered as involving “any real separation of the science into two parts.”<sup>20</sup> The truth is that no problem in social organization can be deeply investigated without running into the problem of social evolution. We cannot study social structure without being led insensibly into questions of origin and development; on the other hand, we cannot study social evolution without considering the structure affected. Complete sociological theory, therefore, does not admit of division into static and dynamic portions. The distinction is merely one of problems, and arises through scientific analysis. It is a useful distinction in sociological investigations and for pedagogical purposes, but it cannot be maintained in a systematic presentation of sociological theory, as all recent sociological writers have discovered.

Moreover, the terms “static” and “dynamic” are borrowed from physics, and are not particularly happy terms when used to describe social processes. As noted above, terms borrowed from the biological sciences are coming to replace these borrowed from physical science in recent sociological discussions. Thus social morphology is used instead of social statics, and genetic sociology instead of social dynamics. But it must be admitted that these new terms are scarcely more happy than those borrowed from physical science; indeed, in some respects they fail to convey the meaning as clearly as the older terms. There is, after all, little in names, provided they are used with clear and definite connotations. The adjectives “static” and “dynamic” are often convenient in the social sciences, and there can be no good objection to their use, since they have been adopted into the vocabulary of nearly all the sciences. We shall continue to speak of the “static” and “dynamic” aspects of soci-

<sup>20</sup> *Positive Philosophy*, Book VI, chap. iii.

ology, therefore, without implying, on the one hand, any separation of the science into two parts, and, on the other hand, any close analogy between physical and social conditions and changes.

*The relation of sociology to social description.*—Some sociologists have created another division of sociology which they term descriptive sociology, made up of descriptions of social activities and institutions. It is true that all science presupposes descriptive material. Thus political science presupposes the description of actual government, economics the description of commerce and industry, biology the descriptive material which we term natural history. But it is true also that mere description is never science. Science, in the strict sense, is always explanatory, it is a higher generalization, revealing laws, causes, and principles. As Professor Small says, "Like all genuine science, sociology is not interested in facts as such. It is interested only in relations, meanings, valuations, in which facts reappear in essentials."<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, another difficulty in creating a descriptive division in sociology, which shall be recognized, is the fact that the field of social description is already covered by three well-recognized departments of knowledge, namely, ethnography, demography, and history; ethnography describing the savage, barbarous, and semi-civilized peoples; demography, describing the contemporaneous societies of civilized peoples; and history describing the past events among the civilized. It has been somewhat of a puzzle which of these three, descriptive sociology should be identified with. Mr. Spencer, in a famous passage,<sup>22</sup> identified descriptive sociology with history—as it ought to be written. Most other sociologists have tended to identify it with demography; while some have not hesitated to assume that the only social description worthy of attention by the sociologist was to be found in ethnography. It is evident, however, that the descriptive material which the sociologist must make use of is to be found in all three of the above disciplines.

It would seem that the best way out of the difficulty is to drop the use of the term "descriptive sociology," just as we do

<sup>21</sup> *General Sociology*, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> *Study of Sociology*, Preface to American edition, p. iv.



not speak of a "descriptive biology." Its use only adds to the confusion already existing as to the relation of sociology to the above three disciplines. There can be no objection, however, to using the term to designate special organizations of descriptive material from the above sources for sociological purposes. This, in effect, is what Mr. Spencer attempted to do in his vast work entitled *Descriptive Sociology*.

### III

#### THE RELATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY TO OTHER SCIENCES

##### THE RELATION OF SOCIOLOGY TO THE SPECIAL SOCIAL SCIENCES

The relation of sociology to the special social sciences, economics, politics, ethics, and the like, has been often compared to the relation of a trunk of a tree to the branches. Perhaps, as Professor Ross has suggested, the tree in question should be thought of as a banyan tree,<sup>23</sup> as many of these sciences have independent roots in psychology and biology. All of these sciences, however, derive their significance from the fact that they deal with some phase of human interactions; and they are, therefore, properly styled the special social sciences. The economics, the morality, the religion of a perfectly isolated being, if such could be thought of, would be something far different from the things we know under those names in human society. As was said above, the special social sciences deal with special phases or aspects of the social life; and they do this by a process of scientific abstraction, that is, by studying these phases as more or less separate, or abstracted, from the total social life. They are all, therefore, in a certain sense one-sided sciences of society; while sociology, dealing as it does with the total social reality, must be thought of as the all-sided science of society.

The relation of sociology to the other social sciences, however, is a purely logical relation, and can be fully described only in logical terms. It is the relation of the general to the special. The special social sciences, as the name implies, deal with problems which are relatively specific and concrete, concerning only

<sup>23</sup> *Foundations of Sociology*, p. 27.

one section or aspect of the social process. Their generalizations are, therefore, relatively partial and incomplete. Sociology, on the other hand, tries to reach generalizations of a higher order, and to present a general or complete view of the social reality. The social problems which are of a general nature, therefore, that is, those which pertain to the social process as a whole, are left by the special social sciences to sociology. What these problems are has already been pointed out.

Moreover, the special social sciences are not logically competent to deal with these general social problems, as their basis of induction is not sufficiently wide. In the past, this fact has not always been sufficiently appreciated by workers in the special social sciences, and the result has been many one-sided theories of the social life. Thus an economist in constructing a theory of social progress would naturally give undue prominence to economic factors, and perhaps even subordinate other factors altogether. This Karl Marx and other students of economic conditions have actually done. It was, in part, as a protest against such "fractional" views of the social life that sociology came into existence. The special social sciences, when pursued by themselves, necessarily furnish only fractional views of the social life-process; they must find their logical completion, therefore, in a general science of society which shall furnish a complete view of social organization and evolution.

The relation of sociology to the special social sciences may, perhaps, be illustrated by the relation of general philosophy, as a *scientia scientiarum*, to all the sciences. Modern philosophy is not indifferent to the sciences, but is, in one sense, to be regarded as a result of the synthesis of all of them. The several sciences, dealing as they do each with but narrow segments of reality, necessarily present but partial views of the universe; to philosophy is left the task of combining these partial views into a complete and ultimate picture of the universal reality. To philosophy, therefore, are left the ultimate and universal problems, such as the nature of mind and matter, the ultimate relations between these two, the nature of causation, etc. In this sense, the relation of philosophy to the several sciences is similar to the relation of

sociology to the special social sciences. The matter might be further illustrated by considering the relation of any general science to the special sciences under it. Thus biology may be considered a synthesis of all the biological sciences, and to it are turned over the general problems of organic life, such as the origin and evolution of species, the nature of nutrition and reproduction, the causes of variation, the theory of heredity, and the like. While these illustrations are imperfect, it is manifest that the relation of sociology to the special social sciences must be of the same general character as the relation of any general science to the special sciences under it.

There has been some debate as to whether sociology should be regarded as a synthesis of the special social sciences or as a science fundamental to these. The question could have arisen only through confusion of the logical relations between problems. All the general sciences are at the same time synthetic in method and fundamental in character. Their fundamental character is wholly a result of the wideness of their syntheses. Their generalizations are not only much wider than those attempted by the special sciences, but, because they are wider, they are also much deeper. Now, sociology, as we have said, attempts generalizations much wider than the special social sciences; and for that very reason its generalizations are of a fundamental character. But it is only through the synthesis—the seeing together—of all social phenomena that such fundamental generalizations can be effected. Hence, sociology is correctly conceived as a result of the synthesis of the special social sciences. At the same time it is well to remember that we mean by this, not a summing-up of the special social sciences, but rather an all-sided generalization of the social process. Hence, sociology is the fundamental science of the social life, the basis of the social sciences as well as their logical completion.

It must be evident from all that has been said that the practical relations between students of sociology, and students of the special social sciences should be those of sympathetic and helpful co-operation. The sociologist needs to know at every point in his work the results of the special social sciences, and, on the

other hand, in order that he may have a proper point of view, a proper perspective, the worker in the special social sciences must be well grounded in sociology.

The dangers of isolation of the special social sciences from sociology and of sociology from these sciences are very grave dangers. Overspecialization in any one social science must be discouraged if one-sided views of social reality are not to prevail. Human life is a unity, and it must be studied in all of its aspects, on all of its sides, if a true conception of it is to be attained. Accordingly we shall emphasize the close interdependence of the several social sciences with sociology and of sociology with these sciences in discussing the relations of sociology with each of them. We shall now note briefly the more important of these sciences and the close interrelations between them and sociology.

1. *Economics*.—First among the special social sciences must be placed economics. This is primary among them because it deals with that phase of the social life which is concerned with the production and distribution of the material means of subsistence. To be more exact, it is “the science of those social phenomena to which the wealth-getting and wealth-using activity of man gives rise;”<sup>24</sup> or in the language of another authority, it “treats of the commercial and industrial activities of men from the standpoint of values and markets.”<sup>25</sup> It is evident, whichever of these definitions one adopts, that economics deals with a most fundamental phase of man’s activity as a social being—the problems connected with the production and distribution of wealth. Its importance, therefore, in understanding the total social life, to the sociologist, cannot be too highly estimated.

On the other hand, economics, more than any other social science, has been guilty of claiming for itself more of the total field of social science than it is justly entitled to. Some economists have even attempted to make it a general science of the organization and evolution of society as a whole. These unjustifiable extensions of economics have been due, in part, to loose and careless definitions, as when it is defined as “the science of

<sup>24</sup> Ely, *Outlines of Economics*, p. 82.

<sup>25</sup> Davenport, *Outlines of Economic Theory*, p. 2.

values," or "the science of the mind as utilizing."<sup>26</sup> Such terms as "value" and "utilization," it is only necessary to remark, are much broader than the economic sphere, and their use in definition leads to a confusion and haziness as to the problems of the science. More often, however, the unjustifiable extensions of economics have been due to the assumption that the economic activities of man, because of their primary character, determine all his other activities. The fallacy of this assumption lies in assuming that what is primitive, or rather what manifests itself primitively, contains all the factors of future development. The resulting view of social organization and evolution as exclusively determined by economic factors is, of course, exceedingly one-sided and untrue to the reality. All of this argues the importance of sociology, as a science of social first principles, for economics as well as for the other social sciences; in brief, that economics must be grounded upon sociology. The economist, indeed, can less afford to dispense with the guidance which the sociological view-point can give him than the sociologist can afford to dispense with the knowledge of facts and principles which economics can furnish. Sociology is indispensable for economics, and economics is indispensable for sociology, if both are to attain the character of realistic science.

2. *Political science and jurisprudence.*—Among the oldest of the social sciences is the science of politics or government. It was first systematized by Aristotle, and down to the modern era may be said to have been almost the sole recognized representative of the social sciences.<sup>27</sup> Its relations with sociology are most intimate. The state is the most visible manifestation of social organization; it is the most imposing, if not the most important, social institution. Hence it is of direct concern to the sociologist. Still there is little excuse for regarding sociology as simply an enlarged political science, or for thinking, on the other hand, that political science will be absorbed by sociology. Political science deals with that aspect or phase of man's social life which

<sup>26</sup> Sherwood, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, September, 1897.

<sup>27</sup> Previous to the nineteenth century ethics was not recognized as a social science.

is manifest in government. While the phenomenon of authority or control is universal in all human groups, political science deals only with the organized authority, manifest in the state, which we call government. Among its chief problems are the origin, nature, forms, and functions of government, the nature and location of sovereignty, and methods of administration.

An important branch of political science is jurisprudence. This is the science of law. Its problems are the nature, genesis, and historical development of law. In its comparative portions it brings together many facts concerning the customs and institutions of different peoples, which makes it closely akin to sociology.

It is evident, then, that political science and jurisprudence are both closely related to sociology. Government and law are two of the most important aspects of human social organization and evolution; and they cannot be understood without understanding the principles which underlie all social organization and evolution. On the other hand, these aspects of the human social process, because of their importance, present problems of their own, and there can be no doubt that they are legitimate fields for independent special sciences. But they will achieve their best development, and sociology will achieve its best development by a recognition of mutual interdependence.

3. *The science of religion.*—By the science of religion is meant, not theology, a metaphysical inquiry into the nature and attributes of God; but a study of the actual phenomena of religious belief and practice among men. An important section is called comparative religion. Its problems are the origin, nature, forms, and functions of both religious beliefs and religious practices. To superficial thought, religion seems to be wholly an individual matter. But close study has shown that nothing is so inextricably interwoven with the social life of man as religion. Not only are the forms of religious belief and practice frequently an outcome of a particular social organization or stage of social evolution; but every type of civilization seems to rest upon a particular form of religious belief. Religious phenomena are, then, social phenomena, and the science of religion is a social

science, though like all the other social sciences it has independent roots in psychology. It is as yet in a comparatively undeveloped and unsystematized condition and its development must come through establishing it definitely upon a sociological basis. On the other hand, sociology needs the enrichment which will come from a scientific study of religious phenomena from the social point of view.

4. *Ethics*.—The relations of ethics to sociology need careful consideration, as those relations are more complex than in the cases of the sciences which we have just considered. Ethics is a science of norms and ideals; it is concerned with the right or wrong of human conduct, and its problem is what ought to be in human life. There can be no doubt that ethics is a social science, since its problems are those of human interaction. On this account some eminent sociologists have considered it to be merely a part of sociology. This was the earlier position of Comte, who at first gave no place to ethics among the sciences. Later in life, however, he recognized the relatively independent position of ethics as a science. On the other hand, there have been many ethical thinkers who have seen in sociology nothing but an extension of ethics. Ethics, they say, has a right to inquire into all phases of human relationships in order to determine the principles of right and wrong, and in their opinion, sociology is simply such an inquiry.

Here we have the old familiar situation. One group of thinkers maintaining that a special social science (in this case ethics) has no right to exist because its field can be covered by sociology; and another group maintaining that sociology has no right to exist because its field can be covered by other sciences (in this case, ethics). As in all of these cases we shall find reasons for pronouncing both of these extreme views radically wrong. Ethics cannot be reduced to a mere chapter in sociology, because its problems are sufficiently distinct and important to constitute it a relatively independent science. Nor can sociology be regarded as a mere extension of ethics, because its problems are not only distinct from, but fundamental to, those of ethics.

Yet it is impossible to separate ethics from sociology or

sociology from ethics in any hard and fast way. It is impossible to study the various types of social organization without indicating the superiority and inferiority of the various types; or to study social evolution without indicating advantageous and disadvantageous adjustments, tendencies toward social survival or social extinction. In general, it is impossible for the human mind to study social conditions without perceiving maladjustments or possible economies not realized; or to formulate a theory of human progress without implications of social obligation. This is not saying that sociology is ethics or ethics sociology; but it is saying that a system of ethics grows spontaneously out of a system of sociology; and that the attempt to exclude all ethical implications and judgments from sociology is not only futile and childish, but undesirable. It is the business of sociology to furnish a foundation for ethics; hence it is desirable to recognize in sociology ethical implications. And such will be frankly the practice of this book.

On the other hand, ethics cannot discuss the ideal for human life, whether individual or social, without taking into account actual social conditions. If it is to be a science of "the good for man," it must build up its conception of the good out of the tendencies and potencies of actual human society. Moreover, there can be no application of ethical principles to actual human life without involving again a consideration of the principles of social organization and evolution. All this is equivalent to saying that scientific ethics must be founded upon sociology. But this is not saying that ethics does not rest, though less immediately, like all the other social sciences, upon psychology; nor is it denying that ethics has metaphysical projections, which are, however, in our opinion, of more interest to the metaphysician than to the ethicist proper.

What, then, is the exact relation of ethics to sociology? Before finally answering this question it will be well to recall that ethics is a normative science, that is, a science of values and ideals. In character, then, it is midway between a pure science and an applied science. All the social sciences, however, may be said to have implicit normative aspects, sociology being the gen-



eral science which furnishes the basis for the synthesis of their implied norms and ideals. Now ethics takes these norms and ideals and develops them and synthesizes them. *Ethics, in its widest sense, is, therefore, the normative aspect of the social sciences.* In its narrowest sense, as the principles of right conduct for the individual, ethics may be regarded as the synthesis of the normative aspects of sociology, psychology, and biology. But inasmuch as the sociological comprehends the psychological and biological, it would be sufficiently accurate to say that individual ethics is the normative aspect of sociology, looked at from the individual point of view, while social ethics would be the normative aspect of sociology, looked at from the collective point of view.<sup>28</sup> The various special branches of social ethics, such as political ethics, industrial ethics, and the like, of course rest especially upon the corresponding social sciences.

Scientific ethics, then, presupposes a scientific sociology, as Professor Small and others have clearly shown,<sup>29</sup> and in large measure the development of the one must await the development of the other. The independence of ethics from sociology as a science, as in the case of all the other social sciences, is a matter of methodological expediency, of the division of labor, not of difference of subject-matter. The various social sciences cannot explain what is and what has been in human society without showing, at least by implication, what must be if human progress continues, that is, *what ought to be.* On the other hand, these sciences are not complete until their normative implications have been developed and harmonized by a general science of ethics; in other words, they find their completion in ethics. The relations between ethics and the other social sciences are, then, relations of mutual interdependence, and this is especially true of the relations of ethics and sociology. The scientific moralist and

<sup>28</sup> It is doubtful whether there should be any division of ethics into individual and social, since every ethical question has both its individual and social aspects. But these terms have come into common usage, and it seems best to indicate that they came from looking at the same body of principles from different points of view (individual and collective).

<sup>29</sup> Small, *The Significance of Sociology for Ethics*; also *General Sociology*, pp. 674-96.

the sociologist should, therefore, work hand in hand, for they are both working at the great problem of human welfare, the one directly, the other indirectly.

5. *Education.*—The science of education, or pedagogy, as it used to be called, is an applied science. On the one side it is concerned with the development of the latent powers and capacities of the individual; on the other with the adjustment of the individual to society, the initiation of the individual into the social life. The science of education thus has two sides—one psychological and the other sociological; in other words, it is an application of psychology and sociology. The psychological aspects of educational science have been sufficiently emphasized, but it is only recently that its sociological aspects have begun to receive attention. It must be evident, however, that if education may be regarded from one point of view, as the fitting of the individual for full and complete membership in the social life, it should proceed with full consciousness of what the needs and requirements of the social life are. There can be no such thing as a scientific educational program without an understanding of the first principles of the social life.

Moreover, education should be not simply the development and adjustment of the individual; it should aid in social evolution, regenerate society, by fitting the individual for a higher type of social life than that at present achieved. And to do this requires an insight into the principles of social evolution as well as an understanding of human nature. The science of education rests, therefore, equally upon sociology and psychology. The educator who would use the educational system as a means of social progress should have a profound knowledge of the principles of social organization and evolution; and even the humblest teacher who comes to his task equipped with such knowledge would find a significance and meaning in his work which he could hardly otherwise obtain.

6. *The applied social sciences.* Many sociologists speak of an “applied sociology;” but it is doubtful if there is such a discipline, or division of sociology. Rather, sociology, like most of the general sciences, serves as a basis, not for one, but for

many, applied sciences. Thus biology is the basis for those applied sciences which are grouped together under the term "the medical sciences." It is also largely the basis of the applied sciences of agriculture and horticulture. But we hardly ever speak of "applied biology." There is scarcely more propriety in speaking of applied sociology, though the term might be justified, (1) as a name for such an organization of the principles of sociology as will show their practical bearing upon human life, which is the sense in which Dr. Ward uses it;<sup>30</sup> or (2) as a name for an organization of all our knowledge of practical means and methods of improving social conditions, for which Professor Henderson has proposed the name of "social technology."<sup>31</sup> In our opinion, however, it would be better if the term "applied sociology" were dropped altogether.

Besides education, among the more important applied social sciences are philanthropy, social economy, and social politics. The best organized of these is philanthropy, or charitology, as it is sometimes called. This deals with the abnormal classes in society, that is, the dependent, defective, and delinquent classes, their genesis, social treatment, and prevention. It has numerous subdivisions, one of the most important being penology, which deals with the social treatment of the criminal class. The science of philanthropy is perhaps the best developed of any of the special social sciences, resting as it does immediately upon a practical art; and, in its broadest sense, it has good grounds for claiming to be the applied department of sociology. However this question may be decided, it is evident that the relation of the science of philanthropy to sociology is very similar to the relation of the science of medicine to biology. The tendency to develop a science of philanthropy apart from sociology, is, therefore, to be regretted; and the tendency of some sociologists to ignore the work being done in the field of scientific philanthropy is equally regrettable. Just as many valuable contributions to biology have come through the development of medical science

<sup>30</sup> In his *Applied Sociology*.

<sup>31</sup> Henderson, "The Scope of Social Technology," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. VI, pp. 465-86.

and art; and just as the development of biology has reacted to deepen and broaden medical science; so similar results can be expected from the close co-operation of the sociologist and the scientific social-worker.

Social economy is an ill-defined term which has lately been used to cover the whole field of social betterment, and so as synonymous with philanthropy in the widest sense. Strictly, however, it should be applied only to the betterment of economic conditions, that is, to industrial betterment. In this sense, it may be regarded as an application of sociology and economics to a particular phase of the social life. Social politics is a term loosely used to designate the science and art of bettering social conditions through the agency of the state or government. It may be regarded as an application of sociology and political science.

However the various applied social sciences may be defined, it is evident that they overlap; that they are closely related to sociology and the other social sciences, and that they are of interest to the sociologist.

#### THE RELATION OF SOCIOLOGY TO HISTORY

There remains to be considered the relations of sociology to one other body of knowledge which concerns human society, and that is history. Personally, I prefer not to call history a science, although it uses scientific methods; it is rather descriptive material preliminary to science, which is a higher generalization of facts into laws and principles. As we have already seen, some sociologists, notably Spencer, would make history synonymous with descriptive sociology. We are now speaking, of course, of written history, history in the subjective sense. But to understand the relations of sociology to history in this sense, one must first understand the relation of sociology to objective history.

Objective history is simply that which actually occurs in human societies; it is the procession of events in the entire life of humanity. History, in this sense, is evidently but a convenient name for the whole movement of human societies from the

beginning of human life up to the present. Sociology, on its genetic side, is concerned with the constant factors in that movement, the laws or principles of social evolution. Objective history, if we include in it present social phenomena, is, therefore, the subject-matter of sociology; and in this sense, sociology is the science of history.<sup>32</sup> But objective history is not only the subject-matter of sociology; in its various phases it furnishes the subject-matter for all the social sciences. It is also the subject-matter of that preliminary organization of knowledge which we term written history, or historiography.

*The relation of sociology to historiography.*—Historiography, or history, in the subjective sense (the sense in which the term is ordinarily used) is the description or narration of past events in the life of humanity. It is the mental picture of some portion of the human past which we are enabled to form by means of documents and other remains. The knowledge of past social phenomena which we get from history is particularly dependent upon documentary evidence. It is, therefore, only a partial picture of the past, more or less accurate according to the character and abundance of this documentary evidence. Moreover, because it rests chiefly upon the evidence of written records, history, as a body of knowledge, is limited to what is known as “the historic period” in the life of humanity. Thus it furnishes no knowledge of a most important stage of social evolution, the period before written records began, during which social institutions were slowly forming and the foundations of culture being laid. To reconstruct this period the sociologist has to turn to the descriptions of the life of present savage and barbarous peoples furnished him by ethnography.

Again, because the method of history is the indirect method of investigating, that is, by means of documentary evidence, rather than the direct method of observation, it rarely includes descriptions of present society. For his knowledge of present social phenomena the sociologist has to turn to demography, various collections of descriptive and statistical material concerning present societies, besides, of course, making use of his own

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Flint, *Philosophy as a Scientia Scientiarum*, p. 334.

powers of personal observation. But this knowledge of present social phenomena is of primary importance in a scientific interpretation of society, in accordance with the general principle that the scientific value of a fact decreases in proportion to its remoteness from the observer.

Thus history, as a body of knowledge, falls far short of furnishing a complete presentation of the subject-matter of sociology. It fails to furnish knowledge of the facts of the earlier stages of social evolution; and it also fails to furnish knowledge of the facts of present social life. In studying social evolution, or the evolution of any particular institution, therefore, the sociologist must turn to ethnography and demography as well as to history. For example, the sociology of the family cannot be constructed from the knowledge which written history affords. All the earlier stages of the evolution of the family as an institution can only be made out by recourse to ethnography, while the latest stages, the present tendencies of the family, can be discovered only by recourse to demographical and statistical material relating to present society.

Moreover, history, as it is usually written, has certain shortcomings from the scientific standpoint which still further limit its utility to the sociologist. Perhaps the worst of these is the predominance of the literary over the scientific spirit in the presentation of its subject-matter. This leads to the story-telling type of historical narrative, and to overemphasis of the dramatic elements in the life of societies. Now, the essence of the dramatic lies in the personal and individual; hence the literary historian crowds his narrative with striking personalities and personal incidents, neglecting not only the less obvious psychical and physical influences at work in the social process, but also the commonplace, recurrent events of the social life. Undoubtedly the personal and the particular have a legitimate place in historical narrative; for without their proper emphasis history could not give a true picture of the social reality; but their overemphasis serves to obscure the real and deep undercurrents in the social life which chiefly determine its course. The literary method of presenting historical facts is, therefore, subversive of scientific

ends; the story-telling interest is opposed to the scientific interest. Consequently, the sociologist can look to the literary historian for but little help.

In a similar way the exclusive attention of the historian to one or only a few aspects of the social life serves to distort the picture of the social reality. Thus much of the history written down to the present has been political history, the history of the state or government. This has been, perhaps, helpful to the political scientist, but it has been insufficient to reveal for the sociologist the forces at work in social organization and evolution. Political history, and in general, one-sided history of all kinds, falls far short of making that exhibit of all phases of a people's life which alone is a sufficiently wide basis for induction for the sociologist.

Although written history furnishes but a part of the facts with which the sociologist deals, nevertheless the co-operation between the sociologist and the scientific historian—the historian who employs scientific methods and who aims at the faithful representation of the social reality—should be of the closest sort. They are both working in the same field and to a large extent have the same aim. The sociologist needs scientific history. He cannot complete his inventory of the social world without its aid. Moreover, sociology cannot content itself, as one author has well remarked, with being merely illustrated psychology; it must also be, at least in its final development, analyzed and compared history.<sup>88</sup> Finally, the historical method of study is of supreme importance to the sociologist, and this fact alone makes a scientific history of all ages and peoples perhaps the greatest desideratum of the sociologist. On the other hand, the scientific historian has need of sociology. Without some knowledge of the principles of social organization and social evolution he can scarcely obtain a proper perspective of his facts; nor can he rightly interpret his facts or explain the causes of social changes without reference to such principles. The scientific historian could do his work more scientifically if he had a critical knowledge of sociological laws and principles. We conclude, then, both that

<sup>88</sup> Bouglé, *Revue internationale de sociologie*, March, 1904.

scientific history is necessary to the sociologist, and that sociology is equally necessary to the scientific historian.

*The relation of sociology to the philosophy of history.*—In the eighteenth century there grew up a body of speculative thought about human progress known as the philosophy of history. Among the founders of this discipline were Vico, Herder, and Condorcet. The attempt of these men and their successors was to find certain laws or principles which underlie historical phenomena and which would explain human progress. It is evident that the problem which the philosophers of history undertook to solve is the same as one of the main problems of sociology, namely, the problem of social evolution, or of progress. The method of the philosophers of history was, however, entirely different from that of the modern sociologist. In the first place, their method was speculative rather than scientific. For the most part they deduced their theories of progress from metaphysical assumptions rather than built them up out of the facts of history. In the second place, the philosophers of history usually sought some one all-pervading principle, which would be “a key to history,” and which would explain everything in the historical movement; while the modern sociologist seeks not some abstract universal principle which will explain everything, but the psychological factors at work in producing social changes. It is not too much to say that sociology is the modern scientific successor of the philosophy of history.

Dr. Paul Barth, of the University of Leipzig, has claimed that sociology is identical with a scientific philosophy of history.<sup>34</sup> But sociology includes the structural as well as the genetic study of societies. A scientific philosophy of history would be at most a genetic explanation of the historical movement—that is, a theory of social evolution. It is only by stretching the term philosophy of history beyond what it logically connotes, that it could be made to include all of sociology. As Comte clearly indicated, a scientific philosophy of history would coincide merely with genetic or dynamic sociology. It would, however, be better to drop the name philosophy of history altogether, both on

<sup>34</sup> Barth, *Die Philosophie der Geschichte als Sociologie*, pp. 4–13.



account of its past unfortunate associations, and because the two aspects of sociological theory—the theory of social organization and the theory of social evolution—are now seen to be inseparable.

A word should be said in conclusion about the relation of the philosophical historian to the sociologist. The philosophical historian is one who is not content with the mere faithful description or narration of past events, but seeks to interpret them, and in some degree to unify them, through the light of general principles. In this interpretation, the older philosophical historians made use chiefly of metaphysical assumptions, such as fate, providence, and the like; but the modern philosophical historian makes use chiefly of psychological principles. He offers a psychological interpretation of social movements. He is, therefore, very close to the sociologist. Indeed he may be said to be a sociologist rather than a historian, to the extent that he makes use of general principles in order to interpret history. If his work is rightly done, it becomes a sort of illustrated sociology, and is of great value to the sociologist in the narrow sense. This type of historian, the sociological historian, we might call him, is becoming increasingly common, and from the sociological standpoint should be welcomed as a valuable auxiliary worker in the field of the social sciences.

#### THE RELATION OF SOCIOLOGY TO BIOLOGY

It is now necessary to examine the relation of sociology to other general sciences. The other general sciences, usually recognized as antecedent to sociology, are mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology. Upon all of these sociology is more or less dependent, but particularly upon biology and psychology, as these sciences deal with the phenomena of life.

We must first consider the relation of sociology to biology. Biology is the general science of life. In its broad sense it is inclusive of all the special biological sciences, such as zoölogy, botany, physiology, anatomy, embryology, and the like. In its narrow sense, it is a science fundamental to these dealing with certain general problems of life, such as cell structure, heredity,

variation, natural selection, and organic evolution. In both of these senses it is evident that biology bears a close relation to sociology. The phenomena of association are phenomena of life; the general laws of biology, therefore, must hold in sociology. More specifically, the laws which govern the bodily activity of the individual (i. e., physiology) must be understood in order to interpret scientifically the interaction of individuals.

Of course, certain sections of biological science are much more closely related to sociology than others. Thus physical anthropology, which has been happily defined as "the zoölogy of man," has many important bearings upon sociology while general biology, furnishing us with the laws of organic evolution, must be regarded as one of the foundation sciences of sociology.

Biology, however, usually limits itself to a consideration of the physical aspects of life, passing on to psychology, in the scientific division of labor, the consideration of the mental aspects. For this reason some have claimed that biology is not directly related to sociology, but only indirectly through psychology. In other words, they claim that all the phenomena of society are psychical, and that all the problems of the social life are psychological. This view is incorrect only because it is extreme. As we have already seen, society is constituted by the psychical interaction of individuals; but this does not preclude the existence of interactions between individuals which are predominantly physical, as, e. g., in reproduction. Thus it comes about that there are some social problems which are largely biological. Among these problems are the laws of the growth of population (birth and death rate), the social influence of heredity (degeneration and eugenesis), and the influence of natural selection upon social evolution. Not only are these problems included in sociology, but their solution is an indispensable step in framing any theory of social organization and evolution. We must conclude, therefore, that sociology rests in part directly upon biology. Indeed, whether such problems as those just mentioned are treated in sociology or biology, is simply a matter of the scientific division of labor. They have always

been considered social problems, however, and will doubtless continue to occupy the attention of social investigators.

But inasmuch as the vast majority of social problems are in the main psychological, the relation of sociology to biology is chiefly indirect. Biology furnishes the background for both psychology and sociology in giving them the laws of organic life. Human society, we may well repeat, is but a phase of organic life; and the laws of all life must apply to the social life of man. The biological sciences, then, dealing with the physical aspects of the life-process, are the preliminary foundation of all the social sciences, even though the latter rest more immediately upon psychology.

#### THE RELATION OF SOCIOLOGY TO PSYCHOLOGY

As we have just said, psychology is the immediate basis of all the social sciences, since the interactions between the individuals of a group are mainly psychical; that is, they are processes which involve consciousness; or, as the psychologists would say, they are *mediated* by consciousness. In plainer language, nearly all of the interactions between individuals are interactions of thought, feeling, and will. Now, psychology is the science of consciousness, or of the mental life.<sup>35</sup> A somewhat more elaborate definition would be that psychology is the science of the forms and methods of experience. Now, consciousness, experience, is an individual matter; hence psychology is, in effect, a science of individual human nature. It investigates the consciousness of the individual to discover the forms and methods of his experience. And as the individual is alone a center of experience, it would seem that psychology, if defined as the science of *immediate* experience,<sup>36</sup> or consciousness, must be limited to the individual.

Still, it must be admitted, there is nothing in the nature of things to prevent the psychologist from going on to investigate the laws of individual interaction, the forms or modes of association, and the evolution of social organization. Some psycholo-

<sup>35</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, p. 1; also Angell, *Psychology*, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> See Wundt, *Outlines of Psychology*, p. 3.

gists have done so; but there are practical reasons which prevent the majority from doing so, similar to the practical reasons which prevent the physicist from taking up the problems of chemistry. The psychologists' own problems of the forms and methods of the mental life in the individual are so vast that practically they have no time left to investigate the interrelations of individuals. Hence, sociology is a practical necessity as a matter of the scientific division of labor. The psychologist, therefore, turns over to the sociologist the principles of individual human nature which he has discovered; and these the sociologist uses to interpret the interactions, combinations, and progressive organization of individuals.

The distinction, then, between sociology and psychology is the same as that between all other sciences—it is fundamentally a distinction of problems. The problems of the psychologist are those of consciousness, of the individual mind, as we commonly say; while the problems of the sociologist are those of the interaction of individuals and the evolution of social organization. To put it in other language, the distinction between sociology and psychology is one of point of view. The psychological point of view is the individual and his experiences; the sociological point of view is the social group and its organization. *Whatever, then, aims at explaining the psychical nature of the individual is psychological; while whatever aims at explaining the nature of society is sociological.*

From the point of view which we have given, sociology presents itself as mainly an application of psychology to the interpretation of social phenomena. Indeed, from this standpoint, all the social sciences become psychological disciplines. This is not saying, however, that the psychology worked out in the laboratory or found in the textbook may be readily and easily applied to explain all social phenomena. The method of the social sciences is not so simple as that. History and the daily life around us afford psychological principles of interpretation quite as important as any offered us by the texts. Statistics reveal great tendencies of human nature which laboratory methods would never suffice to discover. Nevertheless, a mastery of psychology, no

matter whether the knowledge is gained from daily life, from textbooks, or from the laboratory, is essential to the sociologist. Though all sciences contribute of their principles for the interpretation of human life, which the sociologist attempts, yet because of the psychological nature of his subject-matter (social phenomena) psychology contributes more than all of the rest. Equipment in psychology is, therefore, absolutely indispensable for the sociologist. If it is true, as has been recently declared, that "no one is a psychologist unless he is a biologist,"<sup>37</sup> it is even more true that "no one is a sociologist unless he is a psychologist."

#### THE RELATION OF SOCIOLOGY TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

In recent years there has grown up a discipline known as social or collective psychology. What, then, is the relation of this science to sociology? If what has been said is correct, it is evident that sociology is mainly a psychology of the associational process. Now, this is usually exactly what is meant by social psychology. Social psychology is, therefore, the major part of sociology. This has been recognized by many sociologists, as, for example, Ward, who speaks of "that collective psychology which constitutes so nearly the whole of sociology."<sup>38</sup> But social psychology is not the whole of sociology, as some have claimed; for sociology has, as has been already pointed out, also important biological aspects.

It must be noted, however, that the term "social psychology" is often loosely used to designate, not only the psychology of the associational process, but the genesis of the so-called social states of mind of the individual. In this latter case social psychology is evidently a section of the genetic psychology of the individual. Though very important for the sociologist, it would be better to recognize, for the sake of clearness, that this sort of social psychology is a part of individual psychology. With social psychology in this sense we have at present nothing to do.

In the former sense, social psychology is simply an applica-

<sup>37</sup> Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. II, p. 55.

<sup>38</sup> *Pure Sociology*, p. 59.

tion of the principles of psychology to the interpretation of social phenomena. But this is what we said sociology mainly is. Concerning the identity of social psychology with the larger part of sociology, then, there can be no doubt. They have the same problems and the same point of view; and the distinction between sciences is, as we have repeatedly said, a distinction of problems. The aim of social psychology is to give a psychological theory of social organization and evolution. It may be, therefore, best defined as the *psychological aspect of sociology*. A more accurate name for social psychology would be, then, "psychological sociology."

PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY AND BIOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY

The content of sociology is, then, the biology and the psychology of the associational process (i. e., of human interactions). Every social problem, every problem of human interrelations, is resolvable into psychological and biological elements, and may be approached from either side. Just as sociology has its static and dynamic aspects, so it has its biological and psychological aspects; and just as it has been found that the static and dynamic aspects cannot be kept separate in complete sociological theory, so it will be found that in a complete theory of social organization and evolution the biological and psychological factors must be harmonized. Social biology and social psychology, so-called, are simply different ways of attacking the same problem. They have the same problems, and they constitute one unified science—sociology.<sup>39</sup>

Biological sociology, dealing mainly with the influence of natural selection upon social evolution, with the social effects of heredity, and with the principles of population, may, however, be regarded as a foundation for the more important part of sociological theory—the psychological part. Though far from being

<sup>39</sup> This does not, of course, reduce sociology to mere biology and psychology, any more than physiology is reduced to mere physics and chemistry by saying that it is essentially a physics and chemistry of organic processes. Every science derives its principles of interpretation from the sciences immediately beneath it. Besides, since every social problem has both biological and psychological aspects the science of sociology remains a unity, not portions of two sciences.

completely systematized, it is so much better worked out that it may well be taken for granted in developing a psychological theory of social organization and evolution. Accordingly this book will deal directly only with the psychological aspects of sociology.

#### IV

##### THE RELATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY TO PHILOSOPHY

###### SOCIOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Sociology was the last, historically, of the great sciences to be differentiated from philosophy. For a long time prior to the definite organization of sociology as a science there existed a body of speculative thought about human society which was known as social philosophy. This older social philosophy is related to sociology much as the older natural philosophy is related to modern physics and chemistry. It had the same problems as sociology—the origin, nature, and processes of development of human society. It differed from scientific sociology mainly in its methods, which were almost wholly speculative, or a priori. Of course, sociology in its more general aspects still remains a philosophy of society.

Philosophy is no longer to be sharply separated from science. On the contrary, all modern philosophy is scientific in its spirit and methods, in that it has its beginnings in the established results of the special sciences, and in that it bases speculation upon the empirical study of reality. In a generic sense, philosophy is a term often used to designate the more general and speculative aspects of all the sciences. It is entirely right, therefore, to speak of sociology as both a science and a philosophy.

In the stricter sense, however, the word philosophy has now two generally accepted meanings. First, it is used as a general term for all the so-called philosophical disciplines, such as psychology, logic, ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics. Secondly, it is used in a narrower sense as synonymous with metaphysics, including in that term epistemology as well as cosmology and ontology. We have already discussed the relations of sociology to ethics and psychology. It remains only to consider the rela-

tion of sociology to philosophy in the narrow sense, that is, to metaphysics. Before doing this, however, we should like to point out that sociology as a general science has much in common with the so-called philosophical disciplines. Like them, it deals mainly with mental phenomena. Like them, also, it employs the method of generalization—of speculative inference from facts—to a greater degree than the sciences of physical nature. Two general conclusions may be drawn from what has been said. The first is that sociology itself may be regarded as a philosophical discipline, quite as much as psychology, though this is not inconsistent with maintaining at the same time that it is a natural science. The second is that the study of other philosophical disciplines, and especially training in philosophical methods of reasoning, will be found of great help to the student of sociology.

SOCIOLOGY AND NATURAL SCIENCE

Sociology is a natural science in the sense that it studies definite processes in real space and time. Like physics and biology, sociology does not question the reality of its subject-matter. It may be that there is no such thing as the interaction of individuals, as one mind acting upon another mind; but this is a postulate which sociology refuses to question. Its attitude toward its subject-matter—the social process—is the naïve uncritical attitude which all the natural sciences assume toward their subject-matter. It starts with the common-sense view of the world, assuming the existence of real individuals, who are both physical and psychical beings, and who are in mutual interaction with one another.

Again, like all natural sciences, sociology aims only at answering the question, “how?” “in what way?” It traces the coexistences and sequences among social phenomena, showing the method, or technique, of the processes involved. Beyond this it does not go. It does not attempt to give the what or the why of the social life. The what, or objective content, belongs to the descriptive sciences, history and demography. The why, or the subjective meaning of the social life, belongs to philosophy and religion. Though sociology may throw light upon such problems,



as a natural science it makes no attempt to penetrate into the ultimate nature and meaning of things.

The term "natural science" is, we must note, however, sometimes used as synonymous with physical science. In this sense, of course, sociology is not a natural science. Despite the fact that it has certain biological aspects, it is properly placed among the psychical sciences. It is, then, a natural science only in the same sense in which psychology is a natural science.

#### THE RELATION OF SOCIOLOGY TO METAPHYSICS

The natural science point of view saves the sociologist from settling beforehand many troublesome metaphysical problems. It excludes metaphysical problems from sociology, though it does not, of course, exclude metaphysical implications; for these are found in all sciences and in every view of the world. Metaphysics, as Professor James has said, means only an unusually obstinate attempt to think clearly and consistently about the universal reality.<sup>40</sup> It deals with the ultimate problems of reality and of knowledge. It takes the established results of the special sciences, criticizes and harmonizes them, so as to present an ultimate view of reality. In this modern sense metaphysics is not non-scientific in character; it is rather a science of the sciences, a clearing-house of the sciences. It is as presumptuous, however, and unscientific for the sociologist as such to attempt to settle metaphysical problems as it would be for a physicist to deal with sociological problems; and it is a reversal of scientific method to attempt to build a system of sociology upon some shadowy hypothesis as to the ultimate nature of reality.

While sociology must keep to the natural-science point of view, it is better to recognize frankly, however, the metaphysical elements in many of its problems. These words are necessary; for most sociologists have kicked metaphysics out of the front door, but have ended by lugging it in again through some back door. They have rejected as unscientific the idealistic view of the world, but have accepted as scientific the materialistic view. Now, materialism is just as much a metaphysical theory as ideal-

<sup>40</sup> *Psychology, Briefer Course*, p. 461

ism, and the sociologist as such has no more right to assume the one theory than the other at the outset of his investigations. He is not called upon to assume anything as to the ultimate nature of reality; but like all scientific investigators, he should start with the naïve view of the world. It is true that this naïve view has a great deal of metaphysics implied in it; but it does not pretend to be a definite theory of the nature of reality, and is, therefore, merely provisional, subject to correction and revision in the court of last resort—metaphysics itself. Thus the sociologist has no right to assume that mind can be derived from matter and motion, nor that matter and motion can be derived from mind; but he must accept as a fact the existence of physical and psychical phenomena alongside of each other with no discoverable way of deriving either one from the other. Again the sociologist must not assume that all is necessity in the universe; but he must accept the existence of that relative freedom of individual action which consciousness seems, at least, directly to testify to, until investigation proves the contrary.

The sociologist is, perhaps, more excusable for getting entangled in metaphysical problems than any other scientist; for he deals with both the bodies and the minds of men, with physical necessity and free choice; in a word, with human beings in all their complexity and with their interactions. Certain metaphysical problems inevitably obtrude themselves in his investigations. The more important of these are, (1) the relations of mind and matter; (2) the freedom of the individual will; (3) the existence of immutable laws in social phenomena. In each of these problems it is so important that the sociologist should preserve a neutral attitude that we shall consider briefly some of the conditions of each problem.

1. *The relations of mind and matter.*—The naïve view of the world sees in mind and matter two interacting elements, each relatively independent of the other, but each a factor in a complex, unified whole. According to this view, mind may act upon and modify matter; while physical facts act upon and condition mental facts. As opposed to this view materialism asserts that physical facts (matter and motion) are, in the last analysis,

alone determinative of all processes; that mind is a derivative of these; and that we are, from an *a-posteriori* view, automatons. Again, idealism asserts that the physical universe is a mental construct, and has no existence independent of some perceiving subject. Without going farther into metaphysical theories of the relations of mind and matter, it is evident that for the sociologist to assume either of the above theories in his investigation and reasoning is for him to shut his eyes to half of his facts. The sociologist has nothing to gain, and much to lose, through his assuming either that the mind cannot modify and control physical forces, or that physical forces do not modify and condition mind. Through assuming either hypothesis he surrenders the uncritical point of view of natural science and becomes a metaphysician. And he reverses the true method of all science when he attempts to build a science upon a metaphysical theory. It is preposterous, therefore, for a man to offer to the world a view of human society embedded in his metaphysical philosophy as scientific sociology. It may be a valuable contribution to sociological thought, but it is not scientific sociology, because it has abandoned the method of science.

2. *The freedom of the individual will.*—Has the individual a limited freedom in his deliberate actions (that is, is any one of several courses of action open to him), or is this freedom an illusion? This is a metaphysical problem which has puzzled the wisest minds. The general impression is that science pronounces in favor of the latter view—that freedom is an illusion, that we are really automatons—but this is an erroneous impression. Necessitarianism, or determinism, as it is usually called, is purely a metaphysical theory. It is the view that everything in the world is mechanically predetermined by forces acting from behind (by a *vis a tergo*). Freedomism, on the other hand, is the doctrine that human actions may be determined teleologically, that is, by purposes or foresight of ends. It is almost unnecessary to point out that necessitarianism is based upon a mechanical view of the world, and that historically this theory has been prevalent in proportion as the mechanical view of the world, which is more or less based upon the physical sciences, has been dominant.

Determination of activities by purposes or foresight of ends has been called teleological or inner necessity; but this is exactly what is meant by freedom; and it is hard to see how this is identical with physical or mechanical necessity. The fact is that mechanical necessity is the only necessity known to science; and this conception has been built up exclusively within the physical sciences, and purely for practical reasons. To carry over such a conception from the physical sciences and apply it dogmatically to all phases of human life is, therefore, an unwarrantable piece of metaphysical assumption.

It is not necessary, then, for the sociologist to take sides on this metaphysical question; and it is especially not necessary for him to view human society as a theater of physical necessity. It is the business of the sociologist to trace uniformities in social phenomena without reference to any metaphysical theory of human action, explaining them as determined, now by forces acting from behind, and now (when it is more reasonable to do so) by intelligible motives and foresight of ends.

3. *The existence of laws in social phenomena.*—Are there “eternal iron laws” in social phenomena as in the physical world? This question would be at once answered in the negative if we assumed that the human individual has a relative freedom; or if strict metaphysical neutrality be maintained no position regarding it need be taken. The question is, however, methodologically even more important than the other two which we have just discussed. It is said that if there are no laws in social phenomena, there can be no social science; that science is a causal explanation of phenomena through reference to laws; that a sociology without laws is not a science.

That there is some truth in these assertions we have already practically admitted by frequently using the word “laws” in discussing the problems of sociology. The real methodological problem is, however, In what sense shall the word “law” be used in the social sciences? Shall it be used to imply the metaphysical theory of necessitarianism, that is, that the concept of mechanical necessity can be made to cover all phases of human life? Or,

shall "law" be used in a broader sense, without implying any support to any metaphysical theory?

In deciding in what sense the word "law" shall be used in sociology, it is first necessary to call the attention of the student to nearly synonymous words. The words "truth," "truism," "rule," "generalization," "uniformity," "regularity," and "principle," are all often loosely used as more or less nearly synonymous with the word "law." But it is important that they be discriminated from one another, for the word "law" has become peculiarly specialized. Without stopping to define all of the above terms it must be said at once that most, if not all, of the so-called laws in the social sciences belong to one of the above categories—that is, they are generalizations, uniformities, or principles, rather than laws in the sense in which the physical sciences would use that word. Thus Comte's famous Law of the Three States is only a generalization; while the so-called law of least effort (that the greatest gain is always sought for the least effort) is really a psychological principle. Now exactness in the use of terms is desirable in science; hence it is important that we inquire the exact meaning which the word "law" has acquired in the older sciences—the physical sciences. At first in the physical sciences law meant the manifestation of an outer force, controlling the action of things. But as the passive view of nature came to be given up, it came to mean merely the uniform way in which things occur. Later, under the influence of the growth of the mechanical view of nature, law came to mean a fixed, unchanging, and so necessary relation between forces. The concept of a law of nature thus became deeply tinged with the idea of physical necessity. Indeed, in the physical sciences, it became synonymous with physical necessity. Hence the expression "eternal iron laws," embodying the idea that nature is a theater of mechanical necessities.

Now it is the carrying over of this idea which has grown up in the physical sciences to the social sciences which we have called metaphysical. This can only be done by assuming that the subject-matter of the social sciences is homogeneous with the subject-

matter of the physical sciences, as Comte assumed; but this, at present, is an entirely gratuitous metaphysical assumption.

In order to prove that "eternal iron laws" exist in social phenomena as in physical phenomena we should have to prove, (1) that physical necessity rules in human affairs; (2) that stimulus and response are equal to cause and effect. As regards the first proposition, we have already said that it is a mere gratuitous assumption, and is not capable of proof. As regards the second proposition, it must be said that psychology teaches that stimulus and response are something quite different from cause and effect,<sup>41</sup> though the popular mind and even sociologists often assume the contrary. And as psychology is fundamental to sociology, its verdict must be accepted as final by the sociologist.

In scientific language a "cause" has come to mean the invariable, necessary, and equivalent antecedent of a consequent which we call "the effect." Now, the "stimulus" in psychology is not the equivalent of the "cause," but rather the opportunity for the discharge of energy; and the "response" is not the mechanical effect of the stimulus, but is always teleological, that is, directed to some end. Hence it is incorrect in the strict language of science, to speak of a stimulus as the *cause* of a response, or of a bodily state as the cause of a mental state. But the connections between individuals in society are almost entirely those of stimulus and response. Men influence each other, act upon each other, though acting as stimuli to each other. *Hence there are no direct causal connections between individuals in society*; or, to be more exact, there are no direct causal connections between the minds of individuals.

The interaction between individuals which constitutes society, then, is upon the plane of stimulus and response rather than upon the plane of cause and effect. This is one of the first truths which the beginner in sociology needs to learn. One of the *ignes fatui* of sociologists has been to trace causal connections among social phenomena. But it is well to remember that the causal connections between individuals are mainly indirect, through their relation to a common physical environment, and

<sup>41</sup> See, e. g., Titchener, *Outline of Psychology*, p. 343.

only direct in the case of heredity. Just as psychology has been obliged for the most part to interpret the mental processes of the individual in terms of stimulus and response, so sociology will for a long time to come have to content itself with an interpretation of social processes in terms of stimulus and response.<sup>42</sup> Now, what we have said answers the question whether there are laws in sociology in the same sense in which there are laws in the physical sciences. The laws of physical science are laws of cause and effect in the strict sense of those terms. No such laws are possible in social phenomena.

But are there no laws at all in sociology? There is no objection to using the word "law" in the social sciences, provided we do not carry with it all the implications which it has come to have in the physical sciences. By a "law" in the social sciences we can only mean a regular or uniform way in which things occur. In other words, we go back to the older and more general meaning of the word "law," meaning by it simply a uniformity or regularity among phenomena. Even though we grant that human freedom is not an illusion, and that the mental processes of individuals and the processes of society do not illustrate cause and effect in the strict sense of those terms, still it does not follow that human nature is haphazard and that society is without regularities. On the contrary, human nature is remarkably uniform, and the interactions of individuals exhibit surprising regularities. But the uniformities of human nature and society

<sup>42</sup> Of course, there is no objection to using the words "cause" and "effect" in the social sciences in the broad sense of stimulus and response, provided that this is recognized. Under such circumstances, we could speak of the "cause" of a social occurrence, meaning its psychical motivation, not its mechanical cause. Several sociologists have recognized that the word "cause" cannot be used in the social sciences in the same sense in which it is used in the physical sciences. Thus Ross says (*Foundations of Sociology*, p. 55), "the causes, i. e., the motivation of [social] occurrences;" and again (p. 80), "the ultimate cause of a social manifestation must be motive or something that can affect motive." That is, the ultimate "cause" of a social phenomenon is something psychical—something that influences will. But as we have already pointed out, this is not cause and effect in the strict sense. These terms if used, therefore, in sociology, like the term "law," will have to be used in a wider sense than that given them in the physical sciences. For the sake of clearness it would be often better to use the terms stimulus and response.

are due to habits, that is, teleological adaptations rather than mechanical necessities. The habits of action of individuals—using that phrase in its broadest sense, to cover the inborn tendencies and characteristics of human nature as well as acquired habits—give rise, then, to regularities in social phenomena (the interactions of individuals) almost as invariable as those which characterize physical nature. This is what makes the social sciences possible. Law in the social sciences, then, rests upon the fact of habit. We arrive, therefore, at this definition of a social or sociological law: *A social law is a statement of the habitual way in which individuals, or groups of individuals, interact.*

But it may be said that these habitual ways of interacting among individuals are not invariable, and that therefore there can be no sciences of social phenomena. It may be granted that the social sciences can never become exact sciences like the physical sciences. But it does not follow from this that they are not trustworthy bodies of scientific knowledge, capable of affording guidance in all the practical affairs of life. A slight degree of inexactness does not invalidate scientific knowledge because science deals with large masses of facts and general situations. Thus if certain exceptions are found to some social law—like Professor Giddings' law of sympathy, that the degree of sympathy decreases as the generality of resemblance increases<sup>43</sup>—it does not invalidate that law for the purposes of the sociologist, because ninety-nine times out of a hundred he can count on its working.

Again, it is not true that science consists chiefly of laws, unless that word is used in a very broad sense. A science consists equally, at least, of principles. Principles are fundamental truths, which generally explain the ways of working of certain forces or agencies; while laws are more superficial formulations of the observed uniformities of the resulting phenomena. In physical science principles explain by referring phenomena to mechanical cause and effect, action and reaction. But in the social sciences, the agent, man, acts teleologically; hence social phenomena must be explained in teleological terms. Thus it is quite as scientific

<sup>43</sup> *Elements of Sociology*, p. 67; also *Inductive Sociology*, p. 108.



to explain human actions in terms of habit, adaptation, purpose, stimulus, and response as it is to explain physical phenomena in terms of cause and effect. This is only saying, in effect, that sociology is a psychological science; but it is not of course, saying that sociology is a metaphysical science.

To sum up: It is not the business of the sociologist to settle metaphysical problems, nor has he any right to assume, at the present time, that they are settled. It is rather his business upon the basis of a common-sense view of the world, to trace uniformities among social phenomena so far as he can, and to explain social processes in terms of mental activity, that is, in terms of stimulus and response. Only thus can sociology escape from the barren wastes of fruitless, metaphysical discussion; and only thus can it make its own proper contribution to that ultimate world-view to which general philosophy seeks to attain.