

Wesen u. Aufgabe der Sociologie: Eine Kritik der organischen Methode in der Sociologie. L. STEIN. Berlin, C. Reimer. 1898. Pp. 38.

This brochure is the reprint of a paper published in the 'Archiv für systematische Philosophie,' the paper itself being largely the reproduction of a communication to the Third Congress of Sociology, held in Paris, in July, 1897. As shown by the title, the paper deals with the critical and methodological problem of sociology. Dr. Stein's faith in the future of sociology is not shaken by the uncertainty that still prevails as to the character and limits of sociological investigation, nor by the conflicting tendencies as to the methods of research. The fierce struggle still raging among sociologists is not, according to Dr. Stein, a proof of impotence; but, on the contrary, a distinct mark of exuberant vitality. 'Um Mumien kämpft man nicht' (p. 3). In the midst of the fray Dr. Stein boldly takes his stand against the so-called 'organic' (I would rather call it 'metaphoric' or 'rhetorical') theory of society. He agrees above all with Professor Giddings and those others who consider sociology, not as an encyclopædic conglomeration of the special social sciences, cast into a chaotic unity, but as a 'general' science of social elements and first principles. This 'general' science does not annihilate the special social sciences, whose autonomy is justified by the possibility of viewing the social phenomenon (*Menschliches Zusammenleben u. Zusammenwirken*) from three different standpoints: (1) the 'ontological,' (2) the 'historical,' (3) the 'ethical' (normativ), pp. 5-6. Had the unlucky word 'sociology' not been invented 'social philosophy' would have been the right denomination for the new 'general' science of society, which is essentially philosophical and synthetical in character (p. 7). Dr. Stein accepts the traditional division of sociology into two separate branches, 'Social Statics' and 'Social Dynamics.' The former considers the coexistence of individuals whose coöperation for the achievement of common ends gives rise to a certain stability of action, to 'eine typisch sich wiederholende Regelmässigkeit' (p. 7). Its method is chiefly descriptive. The latter endeavors, on one hand, to determine genetically (*entwicklungsgeschichtlich*) the 'causes' of the social facts discovered in the statics, and, on the other hand, to foretell the action of those causes upon the future direction of social evolution (p. 8). The problem with which social statics deals is the determination of the social equilibrium, of the stability of social conditions, viz.: of the coexistence of qualities and modalities in the individuals assembled in society. Social dynamics aims at determin-

ing the succession of the 'actions' of the same individuals. From the category of constancy we pass into that of variability. The method which is entirely descriptive in social statics becomes historico-genetic in social dynamics.

This distinction, which dates from Comte, has given rise to misconceptions, owing to its having been taken as the expression of an original and irreducible duality in the subject-matter of sociology. The final end of social inquiry is, as Professor Giddings remarks, "the synthesis of static and kinetic principles" (p. 60, *Prin. of Soc.*), reproducing the living unity of the social fact. The distinction can, then, be conceived only as a means to that end, imposed by methodological exigencies. I wonder that a cautious thinker like Dr. Stein should not have thought it necessary to point out the true character of the distinction between social statics and dynamics, in order to avoid misapprehension. It would, perhaps, be better to eliminate entirely these two technical physical terms, chosen by Comte as an image and loosely used as such. For statics and dynamics we could substitute, respectively, 'descriptive' and 'genetic' sociology, a denomination which, without any possibility of misunderstanding, would admirably cover the field assigned by Dr. Stein to the two branches of sociology.

Dr. Stein strongly emphasizes the difference between 'natural' and 'historical' causation. There is no denying that the law of causality, as a cosmical law, holds good also in social phenomena. But there is sufficient reason for doubting whether we can ascertain a mechanical necessity and a strict and rigorous generality in social phenomena through the only two sources of inquiry at our disposal, statistics and the theory of probability. Dr. Stein carefully discriminates between the purely 'historical' and the 'social' facts. As to the former, he, with Dr. Simmel, admits it to be an essentially unique thing, an 'Einmaliges,' or *ἀπαξ λεγόμενον*, which cannot be explained by a law, for a law means repetition, and, the historical event being the result of innumerable contributions, it becomes impossible to conceive its identical repetition. But in social phenomena—meaning by these the 'collective' phenomena, *i. e.*, facts relating to groups or masses as opposed to the different ways of assertion of an individual personality—Dr. Stein detects a rhythm, a constancy of structure and a periodicity of repetitions (p. 10). But this rhythm ascertained for social phenomena does not express a rigorous causality, as does the rhythm shown by physical, chemical and biological phenomena. Statistics prove that *B* follows *A* only in a great number of cases, say

in most cases, but not always. Hence social causation is not, in Leibnizian terms, a 'vérité éternelle,' but a 'vérité de fait.' A social rhythm offers only rules, like a grammar, and rules which admit of many exceptions. Here, says Dr. Stein, lies the *πρωτον ψευδος* of social dynamics. It is just on the ground of this irreducible difference between natural and social causation that Dr. Stein strongly opposes the so-called 'biological' method in sociology. When we try to force the social phenomena into the strait-jacket of physical or biological laws, we substitute for scientific explanations verbal entities, images, metaphors. The attempt to explain society in terms of a physical or biological interpretation is not precisely a novelty. The origin of the 'metaphor' of the social organism can be traced back to the ancient conception of macro- and microcosmos. Through the infatuation for a sociology built on strictly physico-biological lines, the metaphor has passed gradually into a strong analogy, the analogy into a parallelism, the parallelism into a formal identity (p. 14).

In his endeavor to show the inefficacy of the 'organic' method Dr. Stein is led to discuss at length the question of social causation, and to point out the true character of the so-called social laws which are, in reality, nothing more than empirical generalizations. A mechanical necessity can be discovered only from the biological side of the social fact, that is to say, in Dr. Stein's terms, 'für den Chemismus des menschlichen Zusammenlebens,' but never from the psychological aspects of the human 'Zusammenwirkens.' Necessity, in social phenomena is of a purely *teleological* character (p. 15). This is a very important point in Dr. Stein's position, and he develops it at length in the remaining pages of his interesting brochure. By teleological necessity is meant the fact that, certain ends (Zwecke) being given, certain means must be selected in order to secure their achievement. The law of teleological necessity, however, does not work if the individual is unable to seize the relationship between the means and the end. Mechanic necessity, on the contrary, acts upon the individual without leaving his will to play any part in the production of the phenomenon. Natural necessity deals with the relationship between cause and effect; teleological necessity includes the relationship between ends and means (p. 31). Inanimate nature knows no aims. Conscious beings only show a tendency to adapt their actions to ends, and the higher the degree of consciousness the more complex the adaptations (p. 35). If social necessity is not mechanical but teleological, if our actions are not subject to an external mechanical pressure but are determined by internal motives, society cannot be conceived as an 'organism,' but as

an organization. The 'organism'—says Dr. Stein—is the *unconscious*, the 'organization' is the *conscious* coöperation of the single elements of a given whole to a common end (p. 36).

I cannot follow the distinguished professor of the University of Berne in all his suggestive developments. The chief interest of his brochure lies in the fact that, in spite of prolixity and repetitions, it brings out, in a very clear way, the conception of social causation as incidental to teleological necessity. This is indeed the fundamental idea of Tarde's 'Logique Sociale.' For the French sociologist social evolution is a progressive systematization of inventions. For Dr. Stein it is a systematization of ends. But the starting point of the two conceptions cannot but be common. Ends, as well as inventions, presuppose the modifying power of thought upon social conditions. And how are the ends set forth? Undoubtedly exigencies of personal and social preservation and development concur in determining the quality of individual and social aims. But, to repeat the old Aristotelean distinction, wants only furnish the *matter*, while thought—*i. e.*, invention—gives the *form*, by creating the whole system of social institutions and social ideals. Invention is just the unseizable and incoercible element of social life, it is the datum which cannot be reduced under the iron rule of law. It is the 'unicum,' the 'Einmalige,' the purely historical fact, it is the element of social variation and the instrument of social selection. It is only when invention has been thrown into the social stream that it spreads by way of imitation, thus giving rise to a series of similar acts which, just on account of their similarity admits of calculation, and therefore can become a matter of statistical investigation. Thus, once more, through the work of independent thinkers, the theory of imitation finds a useful illustration and a suggestive commentary.

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The Subconscious Self and Its Relation to Education and Health.

LOUIS WALDSTEIN, M. D. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1897. Pp. 171. \$1.25.

In listening to a conversation we receive not only impressions of the words uttered, but also of colors and temperature, of the sounds in the trees, the odor of flowers. The attention is, however, fixed upon the words; these we are conscious of, while all the other associated or accompanying impressions sink into a more or less complete state of oblivion. Thus the act of concentrating the attention whereby we become conscious of certain impressions necessitates the exclusion