

THE SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY.

IV. THE ASSUMPTIONS OF SOCIOLOGY.

WITH the great majority of men one fact is all that consciousness can manage at a time. The simplest tasks of combining this and that begin the process of assorting human inequalities. Ability to combine several concepts, and to carry them over into action without misplacing one or all, marks a high order of development. The maid who lets the kitchen fire go out, or leaves the basement door unbolted over night, or serves the dinner without the vegetables, is familiar negative evidence. The bureau chief who fails to take heed that soldiers need boots, or cartridges, or transportation is a variation of the type in another sphere. The organizing thinker or actor who takes in the whole extent of the process which he has to control, and holds the entire complex as a unity in his mind at once, is well known in modern life, but he grows more and more rare as we ascend the scale of organization. The men who can seriously entertain the purpose of finding a way to bind together in one view all the elements of experience which all men have had and may have, occur only here and there in a generation. The men who can adopt such a prodigious program, and who are at the same time able to do some small piece of fruitful work tending toward ultimate realization of the program, are still more scarce. The philosopher, however, always confronts this latter task, and there are always a few philosophers somewhat adequately conscious of the sweep of their problems and of certain controllable minor problems upon which they may profitably work. Since sociology deals with a portion of reality within the scope of general philosophy, sociology can be cultivated fruitfully only after it has enlisted men who are capable of placing themselves and their problems with a reasonable degree of accuracy within the whole system which general philosophy comprehends. The dilettantism which at present riots in the social sciences is due first to the fact that

special kinds of action, which may be abstracted and considered without tracing their relationships very widely, have attracted multitudes of superficial men into pseudo-scientific dealing with social questions. A second reason is that the philosophically capable men who have entered the sociological field have too often devoted themselves so exclusively to some relatively minute detail abstracted from the whole that they have straightway lost their sense of proportion and perspective. The respectability of sociology depends, first, upon its success in maintaining its appropriate subordination within the entire knowing process, and then upon its success in assisting to guide the other life-processes. The former phase of the situation is beginning to exert its appropriate influence in determining sociological method. We have now to point out certain factors that are prominent in this readjustment. In attempting to do so we assume the outlook sketched in the previous papers of this series, but we retrace our steps and start at the beginning of sociological analysis. In the remainder of the series we shall attempt to indicate in greater detail some of the content of these more general propositions.

Whether our conception of an aspect of reality which we wish to know is that it is something distinctly set apart from other reality, or an inseparably integrated portion of reality, the knowing process waits upon some sort of discrimination between the immediate subject-matter and that other from which it is distinguished or abstracted. Involved sooner or later in this process of discrimination or abstraction is the more or less definite consciousness of certain spheres of relationship into which the selected portion of reality extends, in spite of the conceptual delimitation. Thereupon there is further involved either dissipation of attention over the whole content of consciousness or, in the interest of more intensive knowing, some taking-for-granted of things beyond the immediate subject-matter—things with reference to which our chosen material must at last be located if our supposed knowledge of it is to be credible. For our present purpose we mean by “assumptions,” then, all those aspects of reality which form parts of the background of sociology, which, however, do not fall within our immediate field of investigation.

As will appear presently, we even include under the term "assumptions" the very aspect of reality which sociology investigates, viz., human associations. It would be pure pedantry to indulge in dialectic proof that human associations exist. We accordingly number them in this preliminary statement with the other aspects of reality which sociology must take for granted. The conduct of sociology toward the considerations thus assumed must sometimes be active calculation, and sometimes merely a holding itself responsible for adjustment to these remoter considerations whenever it is in order to complete the fragmentary sociological knowing by merging it into the completest possible knowing. By using the term "assumptions" we do not imply that we take the realities thus referred to in a hypothetical or speculative sense. The contrary is rather the case. In order that sociology may have scope for itself, within which attention is focussed in a peculiar way, outside of which attention is focussed in other ways, we assume the reality of certain objects of attention, our own among the rest. We proceed to assert our responsibility for placing our subject-matter at last in its real relations with these other objects of attention. We are then free to pursue our particular inquiries. We shall thus not seem to be asserting an impossible independence of the containing and controlling reality to which our presumptive knowledge must at last render its account.

The assumptions to which it is necessary to refer are accordingly five, viz.: first, the philosophical assumption; second, the cosmic assumption; third, the individual assumption; fourth, the associational assumption; fifth, the teleological assumption.²

² HÖFFDING (*History of Modern Philosophy*, English trans., Macmillan & Co., 1900, Vol. I, Introduction, p. xiv) says that philosophical investigation centers in four main problems, viz.: (1) the problem of knowledge (the *logical* problem); (2) the problem of existence (the *cosmological* problem); (3) the problem of the estimation of worth (the *ethico-religious* problem); (4) the problem of consciousness (the *psychological* problem). The place of the sociological section of general philosophy may be indicated in terms of this scheme by saying that sociology presupposes all of (1) and everything in (2), except that portion of the cosmos which is composed of men associating. Even this latter sociology assumes as a fact, as we have said above. This assumption is the starting-point of sociology. Sociology accordingly accepts responsibility for investigation of associations as such, and elaborates material to furnish a

To the first but brief reference need be made. We shall speak a little more fully of the second. The third we must discuss at considerable length. The fourth has been treated above sufficiently for the present.¹ It will be unnecessary at this stage of the argument to discuss the fifth at all. It is sufficient to indicate that the sociology to be outlined connotes a teleological assumption,² and to promise proportionate attention to that division of the subject in later papers of this series. It is perhaps needless to add that these assumptions are not scheduled as logically coördinate. Our reference to Höffding would estop such appraisal. For certain sociological purposes, however, it is convenient to treat them as though they were equally ultimate and independent.

1. *The philosophical assumption.*—When we undertake to get a philosophical account of the relations of anything there is no stopping-place till we get back to the last metaphysical conceptions which it is possible for us to entertain. If sociological theory is to arrive at completeness of form, it must consequently square with some comprehensive setting. This does not mean that sociology is metaphysics. Neither does it mean that in the present condition of philosophy and sociology there is any visible consensus among sociologists about the philosophical setting of their systems. Precisely the contrary is the fact. All sorts of philosophical assumptions are adopted by sociologists, together with equally diverse theories about things intermediate between metaphysical generalizations and social combinations. The point is that every system of sociology needs for completeness some sustaining conceptions of the whole frame of things. These conceptions have to be borrowed from or foisted upon some scheme of general philosophy.

For instance, every sociologist is bound to assume something about the origin and modifications of the visible world, that shall be his theory corresponding to theological creationism on the one content for (3) to the extent of its concern with relations between man and man. Throughout its work sociology again presupposes and is dependent upon (4), in so far as the mechanism of sentient adjustments must be considered. (*Cf.* above, Vol. V, p. 802, note, and below, *passim.*)

¹ Vol. V, pp. 784 *sq.*!

² *Cf.* below, p. 65.

hand, or to some form of evolutionism on the other. Whether this is a chance world, an arbitrary world, an orderly world, a mechanical world, a spiritual world, or a combination of these and other conceivable types of world, is a question to which every sociology, if it is formally complete, must assume an answer. Sociology cannot furnish an answer of itself, but it is a truncated structure of thought, or, worse, a vapor hurtled by the winds, if it does not fit into presumptive answers to these questions.

Sociology cannot be a system of deductions from the assumptions which it may adopt about antecedent relations, nor will it utterly fall with the failure of those assumptions, but it will inevitably be of a piece with some system, or un-system, of organizing presuppositions. Accordingly, sociologists like Comte have had a fundamental philosophy that in terms rejected not only a theistic but a spiritual conception of the universe. They have nevertheless been recognized as helpful in developing certain parts of sociology by men who as strongly contended for both spiritualism and theism. Again, men have held a fundamental philosophy which excluded the evolutionary idea. They have nevertheless developed sociologies which had a high degree of coherence, whatever might have been their degree of plausibility.

It does not follow that sociology may be equally true and complete, whether attached to a credible or to an incredible philosophy. The bearing of what has been said is that sociology may not have reached a stage in which it can demonstrate that one theory of reality as a whole is compatible and another incompatible with the system of relations which it is the special task of sociology to formulate. Meanwhile it is a necessity of complete mental action to have a place for a theory of the things that are fundamental to the social relations. Otherwise there is no sufficient check upon the play of our imagination in constructing an artificial world out of that social material which it is our task to observe and describe and analyze and proximately interpret. It is a veto upon hasty conclusions in sociology to be obliged to make them fit into some general

philosophy. The necessity of doing this will be of reciprocal benefit indeed to general philosophy and to sociology.

It would obviously be irrelevant to the plan of these papers to burden them with formal statement of the particular philosophical assumptions accepted by the writer. On the other hand, portions of the writer's general philosophy will be exploited without apology in the discussion that follows, whenever they can be made useful in expressing sociological perceptions. An instance appears below (pp. 62 *sq.*) as introduction to the third assumption. The thesis at this point is merely that adequately conscious sociology will hold its material—human associations;—as a segment of reality within the entire reality which requires philosophical wholeness when completely formulated. In so far as we at any time have a philosophy that satisfies our conception of reality as a whole, our sociology is in consequence logically liable to answer for any apparent discrepancy between its formulations and the larger structure. Of course, the converse is in its turn true, as we have implied above,¹ but the consideration to be emphasized under this head is that sociology will succeed merely in being impertinent if it attempts to complete itself without being answerable to general philosophy on the one hand, as well as to literal experience on the other.²

2. *The cosmic assumption.*—The fact to be emphasized under this head is that even those manifestations of life which are apparently most spiritual have their existence within and by permission of conditions that are ultimately physical. These physical conditions have effects which, though more remote and more partial, are just as real as the influence of physical conditions in the case of a volcanic eruption or the destruction of crops by a cyclone

For example, we may be concerned with the quantity and quality of literary production in the United States. At first glance this is purely an intellectual matter. De Tocqueville, Mill,

¹Vol. V, pp. 641, 779, 789, *et passim*.

²No better illustration can be cited of attempted adjustment of sociology to general philosophy than that contained in RATZENHOFER'S *Sociologische Erkenntnis*. This entirely apart from opinions *pro* or *con* about the validity of the philosophy which the author posits.

Carlyle, Renan, and many others have accordingly registered very crude judgments in disparagement of Americans because we have comparatively little literary merit.² It would seem that the most superficial reference to the conditions of human life would have prevented these childish reproaches. The physical conditions of American life thus far have necessarily distracted our powers and devoted them to pioneer work. We have had to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. Individual poverty is no bar to intellectual greatness, but societies are not likely to produce individuals intellectually great, or at least to give them the conditions in which their merit can manifest itself, until the societies are well advanced toward emancipation from the most absorbing struggle with physical conditions. In so far as America has produced thinkers, the probability is that our common heritage in the great world-society has had more to do with this development than the peculiar conditions of our home situation. In other words, the physical conditions hold a mortgage upon men's powers which society can never completely discharge. The terms of the obligation may be considerably modified. Individuals and classes may at least be liberated from the most immediate burdens of the conditions, but our title to free action in this world is always subject to Dame Nature's dowry rights, and the accruing dues never fail at last to be collected.

For instance, the business of harvesting natural ice and the business of composing poetry alike go on subject to the conditions in question; but if two trusts were formed, the one to control the natural ice market in the United States, and the other the poetry market, the relative attention which all concerned would need to pay to the physical laws limiting supply would be great in the case of the ice, and small in the case of the poetry. This does not prove that poetry is independent of physical conditions, but simply that ice is more directly and exclusively subject to physical conditions. Ability to arrive at a certain approximate working measure of the relative agency of the different conditions concerned in social reactions is thus among the prime desiderata for the sociologist. This ability is

² Cf. LECKY, *Democracy and Liberty*, Vol. I, pp. 127-9.

simply sociological common-sense. It is perception of the elements of the situation, and judgment of proportions among the elements.

Consequently, if we are dealing with individual or group cases of industrial incapacity, for instance, we confront the question how largely it is congenital. If we are dealing with the vices of intemperance or of licentiousness, we have problems, in part at least, of pathology and of biological philosophy. If we are dealing with more serious criminality, we are in the thick of the positive questions about the measure of irresponsibility in consequence of violation of physical law by the delinquent or his ancestors.

In this survey we cannot enter specifically into any of the questions thus suggested. They all belong more properly elsewhere. The main contention may be repeated in this form: The knowledge that men will want above all other knowledges when they are wise enough to understand their own interests is knowledge of the conditions of human life. When men reach ability to maintain an effective demand for this knowledge, they will be dissatisfied with the ways in which our sciences satisfy this demand. Specifically, we have no respectable report of the ways in which the operation of cosmic laws has determined the course of human development. History as it is written is very largely a solemn farce, because it persists in devoting relatively so much more strength to the superficial and inconsequential factors in the development of society than to the essential factors. If the truth were known, we might find, for example, that it was not bad politics, nor bad political economy, but ignorance of agricultural chemistry that overthrew the Roman empire. We might find that the crusades were less inspired by piety than by poverty, and that this poverty was primarily the correlate of outraged physical law. Hundreds of historians have discoursed very wisely about the incidents of the Hundred Years' War, but they have hardly thought to inquire whether the violated physical law, that was producing the plague and the black death all over Europe, was not somehow a more fundamental influence in making domestic and international politics than all the questions

between courts, and all the results of campaigns. The various materialistic and mechanical philosophies of history, that have attempted to find the secret of human development in the inevitable operations of nature, have not overestimated the absolute value of this fundamental and constant factor. They have simply miscalculated its ratio and some of its other relations to all the other factors. There is neither free will nor free thought nor free feeling in the world of people. Feeling, thought, and volition are tethered to fixed physical conditions. This is as true of the rhapsody of the devotee, the exhortation of the zealot, the vision of the poet, the speculation of the metaphysician, as it is of the geographer's search for the north pole or the miner's delving for gold or coal. All that men do or desire is either a drifting on the tide of physical conditions or primarily some sort of reaction upon those conditions. The extent to which men can act, and the mode of their action, is not to be deduced from the formulas of an absolutely defined freedom, for that condition exists only in the speculative imagination. On the other hand, the formulas of volition are not to be derived from physical law alone. The scope of sentient action is, however, merely that restricted area to which the individual or the generation is limited by the conditions of physical nature.

All this is nearly as trite among sociologists as it is among natural scientists, but it will doubtless require many generations for many people to adjust themselves properly to this axiom of social science. Nobody knows all that it involves. The psychologists are trying to find out for us how far we are obeying physical impulse when we suppose ourselves to be acting from strictly psychological initiative. Lester F. Ward has committed himself to the theses that "the desires of sentient beings constitute true natural forces,"¹ and furthermore that "the desires of men obey the Newtonian laws of motion."² Whether these theorems hold or not, they are symptoms of intelligence about the common basis of all human facts. We are portions of matter. We are fragments of the physical world. Not a force that shapes the earth's crust, or puts forth vegetable life, or generates animal

¹ *Dyn. Soc.*, Vol. I, pp. 458, 468, 486, etc.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 95 sq.

forms, is suspended in the special spheres where men buy and sell and compete and contract and legislate and pursue political and social rivalries, or cultivate the æsthetic arts and carry on scientific research and promote spirituality. The physical forces are all prescribing the thus-far-and-no-farther for each and every one of these activities. Whether we are concerned with an individual teacher or preacher threatened with nervous prostration, or a football team unable to win games, or a slum population showing an abnormally high death-rate, or an industrial class developing peculiar types or numbers of physical or mental diseases, or the multiplication of degenerates in certain strata of society, or the alleged decadence of a nation, or the apparent retrogression of one of the great races—in either case we encounter the same primary condition, as the first factor to be estimated. Whether the facts are viewed as social or individual, one line of evidence to be traced out is that which concerns sanitation, shelter, dietary, physical habits, physical surroundings, physical antecedents.

It is not implied that the sociologist must assume conclusions upon such questions as those which have been in debate between Spencer and Weismann. Whether heredity or environment is the more forcible factor in human evolution is more of a mystery to the biologist today than he has ever acknowledged before. Whatever laymen or biological middlemen may assert, very little is known about the ratio of the functions of these two factors. The point to be urged is that the same forces which have reduced the universe from formless star-dust to a stupendous system of organized processes are still the undercurrents of every human life. Through the facts of food and sex, for example, we are indissolubly united from the past and toward the future with the ceaseless operation of the physical forces that have laid course after course in the structure of the worlds, and of the organic products upon the world. We may never unravel the methods of the physical forces that make the ultimate conditions of life, but we may know them as facts, and may make somewhat appropriate account of them in our calculations of the possibilities of practical conduct.

There is a favorite fancy in Germany that insomnia is more prevalent at the full of the moon than during the rest of the month. It is no fancy that every motion of every individual life has its proportional place in that organization of cosmic force of which it is a minute fragment. It is superstition to ask what were the positions of the stars when the Prince of Wales or President Kruger was born, and to construct horoscopes to foretell the incidents of their career. It is science to trace the community of substance and of destiny between our earth and the rest of the cosmic system, and to learn how the specific conditions that prevail here are but details of the common conditions which obtain throughout the universe. It is a parody of science to select some single form in which matter moves—say gravitation—and to go through the motions of explaining all physical and human facts in terms of this form alone. It is the utmost sobriety and wisdom to realize that all physical and human facts have universal antecedents in common. Sociological discernment has the task of discovering, in the first place, how far and how decisively this universal physical element interpenetrates the subsequent and special human manifestations which are our immediate concern. The omnipresence of the universal cosmic conditions around and within every human motion is the first prime factor to be estimated at its actual relative worth in every analysis of an individual act or of a group status. When Feuerbach said, "Man is what he eats," he would have been wholly right if man did nothing but eat. Man is what he eats plus the other things that have been organized into his nature by the other things that he does. If we understand Feuerbach to mean the human species, as distinct from the lower orders of animals, our assent is still qualified in the same way, but in a lesser degree. If we understand the proposition as referring to individual men, it is true, of course, only if we credit the individual specimen first with all the eating that all his ancestors have done, and then with all their other care of themselves, with all the air they have breathed, and with all the work or rest that has exhausted or conserved their force. Even then we must balance the one hyperbole with others, and say, for

instance, that "man is what he thinks," and still further, "man is what other men make him."¹ These latter phases of the case are not now in point. Reserving these sides of human conditions for consideration in their turn, we have to provide in this part of our analysis for due insistence upon the inevitable importance of the physical setting in which even the spiritual constituents of life have their place. Like the warp through which the shuttle carries the threads of the web, these physical factors form the rude tissue which is in turn shot through and through by the dependent activities in every department of individual life and of the social process.²

We are but dealing with the cosmic assumption a little more specifically when we concentrate attention upon men's more immediate physical environment. If we wish to approach close to the precise facts, we must put ourselves under the tuition of zoölogist, physiologist, and experimental psychologist. This is their special territory. They are dealing with elements in the world of things, and particularly with manifestations of those elements, first, in the animal portion of the world of things, and, second, in the animal side of the world of people. Our present purpose is not to invade the territory of these specialists, but to indicate the direction in which the problems of sociology eventually run into theirs.

The fact which we indicate at this point is that populations differ from each other in consequence of differences in the geography, topography, and climate of the regions which they inhabit. This is no nineteenth-century discovery. Hippocrates

¹"The 'social man' is a person who learns to judge by the judgments of society." (BALDWIN, *Social and Ethical Interpretations*, p. 154.)

²That this is strictly commonplace is evident from the fact that citations of all the arguments in which substantially what we are saying is emphasized, in some form or other, would require mention of nearly everything that has been written by the systematic sociologists. SPENCER'S *Synthetic Philosophy*, FISKE'S *Cosmic Philosophy*, and LOTZE'S *Microcosm* may be named as giving place to the element we are considering, though in a range of thought more inclusive than sociology. WARD, *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY*, September and November, 1895, and *Outlines of Sociology*, chaps. ii and iii, and RATZENHOFER, *Sociologische Erkenntniss*, §§ 8-11, are symptomatic of sociology in general in its apprehension of the same. EMERSON draws edifying mysticism from the same perception in his essay on the *Perpetual Forces*.

seems to have detected it five centuries before Christ, but the twentieth Christian century will doubtless long have been ancient history before many men learn to take full account of the time-worn truth.

It must be admitted that the greater part of the world's observations in this connection up to date have been merely inaccurate rhetorical advertisements of facts which require more precise investigation. For our present purpose these inexact descriptions are sufficient. We are laying stress upon the fact that a physical environment not only always exists around every society, but that it always affects the activity, character, and organization of that society. No one can measure, in any generally valid formulas, the force of this environment. Our present point is that it has force, that this force is incessant, that it is powerful, that it is a factor which may never be ignored, either in accounting for human affairs in the past or in planning for human welfare in the future.

Although we may find more precise examination of the facts in more recent literature, we cannot find more forcible general statement, and perhaps not more vivid illustration, than in Buckle's excursion into the history of civilization. For instance, his general thesis may be adopted bodily as a perception for which there is a permanent place in sociology :

When we consider the incessant contact between man and the external world, it is certain that there must be an intimate connection between human actions and physical laws ; so that, if physical science has not hitherto been brought to bear upon history, the reason is either that historians have not perceived the connection, or else that, having perceived it, they have been destitute of the knowledge by which its workings can be traced. Hence there has arisen an unnatural separation of the two great departments of inquiry, the study of the internal and that of the external, and, although in the present state of European literature there are some unmistakable symptoms of a desire to break down this artificial barrier, still it must be admitted that as yet nothing has been actually accomplished toward effecting so great an end. The moralists, the theologians, and the metaphysicians continue to prosecute their studies without much respect for what they deem the inferior labors of scientific men ; whose inquiries indeed they frequently attack, as dangerous to the interests of religion, and as inspiring us with an undue confidence in the resources of the human understanding. On the other hand, the

cultivators of physical science, conscious that they are an advancing body, are naturally proud of their own success; and, contrasting their discoveries with the more stationary position of their opponents, are led to despise pursuits, the barrenness of which has now become notorious.

It is the business of the historian to mediate between these two parties, and reconcile their hostile pretensions by showing the point at which their respective studies ought to coalesce. To settle the terms of this coalition will be to fix the basis of all history. For, since history deals with the actions of men, and since their actions are merely the product of a collision between internal and external phenomena, it becomes necessary to examine the relative importance of those phenomena; to inquire into the extent to which their laws are known; and to ascertain the resources for future discovery possessed by these two great classes, the students of the mind and the students of nature.¹

Buckle's second chapter is still worth reading for its illustrations of the main proposition. All these illustrations are to be taken with a liberal degree of reserve, but we may discount whatever percentage we will from the credit given to physical influences, and the fact remains that, once having our attention called to the matter, we can never again dismiss the physical environment as a negligible quantity in human reactions.

Reference has been made to Buckle purely for illustrative purposes. He is not cited as in any sense authoritative or exemplary, except as he gave vigorous expression to an element that must enter into all valid sociology. Nor is this recourse to a certain type of historical generalization a tacit surrender of what was said above,² and a sign of consent to make sociology after all merely a philosophy of history. On the contrary, even if we had reached final conclusions in the region which Buckle occupies, they should be regarded as mere preliminaries to the conclusions which we want to reach in practical sociology. It may be said in passing that these general conceptions of the relation of environment to men have been used, and at the same time have been made more specific, in certain recent developments of economic theory. Thus they are at the basis of Marx' social philosophy. They have been developed in Loria's *Economic Basis of Society*. In a certain form they furnish the substance of Patten's fundamental economic doctrine; and they

¹ Vol I, chap. i, p. 25.

² Vol. V, p. 509, *et passim*.

have fashioned the master-key which a multitude of men have tried to apply in different ways to unlock the social mysteries. No more significant recent work can be named in this field than that of Ammon, *Die Gesellschaftsordnung und ihre natürlichen Grundlagen*.¹

But these more general aspects of the universal environment condition are, after all, merely preliminaries to the more particular aspects of the same facts, which are of increasing interest to the practical sociologist in proportion as they emerge in the details of the everyday life of living men. Whether we ever succeed or not in generalizing the historic influence of environment upon the course of civilization, we know enough about it to be without excuse if we neglect the influence of environment upon ourselves and our neighbors. Hardly a program for the improvement of present life omits today the environment element; and many of the most reasonable programs make environment the chief practical consideration. From the ideals of art leagues, that would make our cities externally beautiful, to the plans of criminologists, who would furnish reformatory methods and post-reformatory opportunities favorable to habits of industry, we are learning to be suspicious of all theories of progress which do not rest hard upon readjustment of external surroundings. This is the point of departure of our modern charities, our social settlement policies, our educational theories, our devices for applying religion. People who are zealous for the prestige of religion are apt to misunderstand and misrepresent this calculation upon the influence of the external. At the recent International Congregational Conference in Boston (1899) some of the English theologians are reported to have sneered at Professor Graham Taylor's plea for more attention to the present welfare of laborers, as an attempt to substitute "physical evolution" for improvement of men from within. This was probably the utterance of ignorance more than of cant. It must be admitted, of course, that there has been a vast amount of unwise glorification of improved environment, as though it were an end

¹First German ed., Fischer, Jena, 1895. French transl. of second ed., Fontemoing, Paris, 1900.

instead of chiefly a means, and as though it were the sole and sufficient means instead of a condition which affords favorable scope for more intimate means. Discounting these familiar and natural exaggerations, there remains for sane and balanced social theory the knowledge that the surroundings may turn the scale for individuals and groups from advancement to retrogression, or *vice versa*. Whether men in modern societies, in country or city, shall be making way in the essentials of manhood, and in social integration, or shall be personally and socially deteriorating, may be determined by the housing and paving and drainage, and physical conditions of labor, and types of recreation, which make up the setting of their lives. These elements, then, are real terms in the political and social and religious problem of enlightened societies.

In short, we may say that any competent theory of human associations must be a theory of something more than human associations. It must be able to connect itself with the facts antecedent to human association, both in time and in thought. It must square with knowledge about those physical and vital relationships upon which the later social phenomena rest. In a word, some of the social forces are not social at all. The paradox merely has in view the antecedent conditions, physical and vital, which fix the limits and influence the direction of sentient and social action, while they are themselves phenomena neither of consciousness nor of association. A complete theory of human association must accordingly include a full account of all physical and vital forces in their action upon the conditions and incidents of association. It has been a part both of the strength and of the weakness of sociology up to date that recognition of this relation has been distinct. The good results of the perception have been shown in restraint upon those social theorizings which ignored physical limitations. The evil results have appeared among sociologists who have lively convictions of the importance of physical science, but insufficient acquaintance with its contents. Many of these have tacked upon sociology their extemporized applications of supposed scientific conclusions. The sequel has been great prejudice and scandal of sociology

among persons competent to criticise the assumptions so used. In the present state of knowledge it is safest for those sociologists who approach the subject from the humanities side to let this border territory severely alone. The best work will be done there at present either by men whose sociological interest is hardly known to themselves, or by sociologists who have approached the problems of association from the physical side. There are certain uses in carrying biological speculations over into the field of human associations, just as there are certain uses in carrying psychological speculations back into the field of biology. The misuse of this method appears when sociologists duplicate the practice of those thrifty New England fishermen who used to send their young herring across the ocean and bring them back as French sardines. The biological generalizations which sociologists are apt to use are inventions of speculative philosophers, who have exported them into biology, and then have imported them into sociology as accredited scientific results.

For instance, versions of supposed laws of heredity, environment, natural selection, have done service in sociological theory, while competent biologists have never sanctioned their use, except as hypotheses. They cannot be validly used in any other way in sociology. It is therefore safer and more economical in the end for sociologists to employ such hypothetical scientific data as little as possible, and to confine themselves to territory in which they can be more sure of their ground. The sociologist must know where his problems reduce to physical problems, but he must know that he is not, as a sociologist, equipped for their solution.

In the course of his ethical argument,² and frequently elsewhere, Spencer has adverted to the impotence of the idea of causation in most minds. His thought runs back to the premises now under consideration. Knowledge of social conditions and movements involves intelligence about the physical setting in which associations occur, and of the physical forces of which human associations are in part the product. In practice this amounts to a demand that at every step in sociological theory

² *E. g.*, *Principles of Ethics*, Book I, chap. iv, *et passim*.

the sociologist shall hold himself bound to inquire: Do my assumptions about human associations pay due regard to the most and the best that is known about physical law? This means that every discovery which materially modified our conceptions of the physical universe would necessitate revision of the most orthodox sociology. It means also that sociological theories which depend in any intimate way upon conceptions of physical relationships are answerable in the first instance to physical science for the validity of their premises.

In the nature of the case sociology is likely to suffer long from assumptions of pseudo-science. Sociologists are no more immune than other laymen against popular scientific error. They are no more sure than other laymen to know the limits of scientific authority. Hence all sociological theory that is deduced from physical premises is suspicious until higher authority than that of the sociologists has passed upon the assumed scientific data.

A typical schedule of physical laws as rendered by a sociological philosopher is that of Gumpowicz.¹ As a literal account of physical reality the schedule is useless, yet it may serve as a general description of certain obvious aspects of natural law. English-speaking sociologists who have no severe training in the rudiments of physical science, and who are not in close touch with competent scientific authorities, are likely for a long time to take their bearings in the physical world from Herbert Spencer. Whether the authorities at last consign Spencer's "first principles" to the realm of poetry or accept them as science, they are certain to furnish to a considerable extent the presumptions with which the sociologists will work for some time to come.² The point to be emphasized is that the

¹ *Grundriss der Sociologie*, pp. 62-70, and American translation, pp. 74-82. The generalizations are: (a) the law of causation; (b) the law of development; (c) regularity of development; (d) the law of periodicity; (e) the law of complexity; (f) reciprocal action of heterogeneous elements; (g) adaptation to an obvious end; (h) identity of forces; (i) similarity of events; (j) law of parallelism.

² Viz.: (a) the indestructibility of matter; (b) the continuity of motion; (c) the persistence of force; (d) the persistence of relations among forces; (e) the transformation and equivalence of forces; (f) the rhythm of motion; (g) evolution; (h) the instability of the homogeneous; (i) the multiplication of effects; (j) segregation; (k) equilibration; (l) dissolution.

sociologists, though rarely physical scientists, are dealing with a subject-matter which is in part that of physical science. They are sure to carry preconceptions of the physical relations involved into their descriptions and interpretations of association. Progress toward authoritative sociology must consequently involve incessant reference of crude physical conceptions to competent scientific review, and consequent reorganization of sociological theory whenever it rests upon untenable scientific assumptions.

3. *The individual assumption.*—In order to an adequate theory of human associations there is need of intimate acquaintance with the human individual, the actual person concerned in association, the germ plasm of the whole affair. This is to be insisted upon for its own sake, but also incidentally for the reason that certain critics of present tendencies in sociology insist that the sociologists are entirely on the wrong track, since they start by leaving individuals out of the account. These critics assert that the sociologist cares only about societies, but that the things which he thinks he knows about societies are necessarily wrong, because we cannot know societies without understanding the persons who compose the societies.

The criticism seriously misinterprets the sociologists. Instead of ignoring the individual, nobody has seen more clearly than the sociologists that we must stop taking a fictitious individual for granted, or, still worse, assuming that it is unnecessary to take a real individual into the account at all. Nobody has more strenuously insisted that we must analyze human personality to the utmost limit in order to posit the real actor in association. The sociologists have therefore quite as often erred in the direction opposite to that alleged by these critics. They have invaded psychological and pedagogical territory, and usually without equipment to do respectable work. They have been tempted to this sort of foray by encountering in their own proper work the need of more knowledge of the individual than is available. It is true the sociologists think that, when division of labor is fully organized, study of the individual, as such, will fall to others. But the social fact and the social process will never be understood till we have better knowledge of the individual element in the fact

and the process. Professor Baldwin spoke for sociology as truly as for psychology when he said :

It is the first requirement of a theory of society that it shall have adequate views of the progress of the social whole, which shall be consistent with the psychology of the individual's personal growth. It is this requirement, I think, which has kept the science of society so long in its infancy; or, at least, this in part. Psychologists have not had sufficient genetic theory to use on their side; and what theory they had seemed to forbid any attempt to interpret social progress in its categories. As soon as we come to see, however, that the growth of the individual does not forbid this individual's taking part in the larger social movement as well, and, moreover, reach the view that in his growth he is at once also growing into the social whole, and in so far aiding its further evolution — then we seem to have found a bridge on which it is safe to travel and from which we can get vistas of the country on both sides.¹

In this connection we may adopt another remark of Professor Baldwin :²

. . . . one of the historical conceptions of man is, in its social aspects, mistaken. Man is not a person who stands up in his isolated majesty, meanness, passion, or humility, and sees, hits, worships, fights, or overcomes another man, who does the opposite things to him, each preserving his isolated majesty, meanness, passion, humility, all the while, so that he can be considered a "unit" for the compounding processes of social speculation. On the contrary, *a man is a social outcome rather than a social unit.* He is always, in his greatest part, also someone else. Social acts of his — that is, acts which may not prove anti-social — are his *because they are society's first*; otherwise he would not have learned them nor have had any tendency to do them. Everything that he learns is copied, reproduced, assimilated from his fellows; and what all of them, including him — all the fellows, the socii — do and think, they do and think because they have each been through the same course of copying, reproducing, assimilating that he has. When he acts quite privately it is always with a boomerang in his hand; and every use he makes of his weapon leaves its indelible impression both upon the other and upon him.

It is on such truths as these, which recent writers have been bringing to light,³ that the philosophy of society must be gradually built up. Only the neglect of such facts can account for the present state of social discussion. Once let it be our philosophical conviction, drawn from the more general results of psychology and anthropology, that man is not two, an ego and an alter, each of which is in active and chronic protest against a third great thing, society; once dispel this hideous un-fact, and with it the remedies found by the egoists, back all the way from the Spencers to the Hobbeses and the

¹ *Social and Ethical Interpretations*, p. 81.

² *Idem*, p. 87.

³ Stephen, S. Alexander, Höffding, Tarde.

Comtes—and I submit the main barrier to the successful understanding of society is removed.

At the same time there should be no difficulty in getting it understood that, while biology and psychology have to do with the individual when he is in the making, sociology wants to start with him as the finished product. There is a certain impossible antinomy about this, to be sure, for our fundamental conception is that the individual and his associations are constantly in the reciprocal making by each other. Nevertheless, there are certain constant aspects of the individual which furnish known terms for sociology. They are aspects which present their own problems to physiology and psychology on the one hand, and to sociology on the other; but in themselves they must be assumed at the beginning of sociological inquiry.

Before discussing the more immediately sociological aspects of the individual assumption, then, a fragment of the author's philosophy of the individual may be stated. The subsequent analysis is not dependent upon these conceptions, but for purposes of exposition it is convenient to put them together.

To the psychologist the individual is interesting as a center of knowing, feeling, and willing. To the sociologist the individual begins to be interesting when he is thought as knowing, feeling, and willing *something*. In so far as a mere trick of emphasis may serve to distinguish problems, this ictus indicates the sociological starting-point. The individual given in experience is thought to the point at which he is available for sociological assumption, when he is recognized as a center of activities which make for something outside of the will. These activities must be referred primarily to desires, but the desires themselves may be further referred to certain universal interests. In this character the individual becomes one of the known or assumed terms of sociology. The individual as a center of active interests may be thought both as the lowest term in the social equation and as a composite term whose factors must be understood. These factors are either the more evident desires, or the more remote interests which the individual's desires in some way represent. At the same time it

must be admitted at the outset that these assumed interests are like the atom of physics. They are the metaphysical recourse of our minds in accounting for concrete facts. We have never seen or touched them. They are the hypothetical substratum of those regularities of conduct which the activities of individuals display.

In this connection the term "interest" is to be understood not in the psychological but in a teleological sense.¹ The sense in which we use the term is antecedent to that which seems to be predominantly in Professor Baldwin's mind in the following passages:

The very concept of interests, when one considers it with reference to himself, necessarily involves others, therefore, on very much the same footing as oneself. One's interests, the things he wants in life, are the things which, by the very same thought, he allows others also the right to want; and if he insists upon the gratification of his own wants at the expense of the legitimate wants of the "other," then he in so far does violence to his sympathies and to his sense of justice. And this in turn must impair his satisfaction. For the very gratification of himself thus secured must, if it be accompanied with any reflection at all, involve the sense of the "other's" gratification also; and since this conflicts with the fact, a degree of discomfort must normally arise in mind varying with the development which the self has attained in the dialectical process described above.

* * * * *

On the one hand we can get no doctrine of society but by getting the psychology of the "socius" with all his natural history; and on the other hand we can get no true view of the "socius" without describing the social conditions under which he normally lives, with the history of their action and reaction upon him. Or, to put the outcome in terms of the restriction which we have imposed upon ourselves—the only way to get a solid basis for social theory based upon human want or desire, is to work out first a descriptive and genetic psychology of desire in its social aspects; and, on the other hand, the only way to get an adequate psychological view of the rise and development of desire in its social aspects is by a patient tracing of the conditions of social environment in which the child and the race have lived and which they have grown up to reflect.²

¹ Here again we have a term which has insensibly grown into force in sociology, and it would require long search to trace its history. It may be found almost indiscriminately among the sociologists. Its use sometimes leaves the impression that the author attaches to it very little importance. In other cases it seems to be cardinal. No writer has made more of it than RATZENHOFER, *Sociologische Erkenntnis*, chap. ii, *et passim*.

² *Social and Ethical Interpretations*, pp. 15, 16, 21, 22.

The somewhat different concept of this element "interest" which we posit may be indicated at first with the least possible technicality. We may start with the familiar popular expressions "the farming interest," "the railroad interest," "the packing interest," "the milling interest," etc., etc. Everyone knows what the expressions mean. Our use of the term "interest" is not strictly parallel with these, but it may be approached by means of them. All the "interests" that are struggling for recognition in business and in politics are highly composite. The owner of a flour mill, for example, is a man before he is a miller. He becomes a miller at last because he is a man; *i. e.*, because he has interests—in a deeper sense than that of the popular expressions—which impel him to act in order to gain satisfactions. The clue to all social activity is in this fact of individual interests. Every act that every man performs is to be traced back to an interest. We eat because there is desire for food, but the desire is set in motion by a bodily interest in replacing exhausted force. We sleep because we are tired, but the weariness is a function of the bodily interest in rebuilding used-up tissue. We play because there is a bodily interest in use of the muscles. We study because there is a mental interest in satisfying curiosity. We mingle with our fellow-men because there is a mental interest in matching our personality against that of others. We go to market to supply an economic interest, and to war because of some social interest of whatever mixed or simple form.

With this introduction we may venture an extremely abstract definition of our concept "interest." *In general an interest is an unsatisfied capacity, corresponding to an unrealized condition, and it is predisposition to such rearrangement as would tend to realize the indicated condition.*¹ Human needs and human wants are incidents in

¹ Professor Dewey's formula is: "*Interest is impulse functioning with reference to self-realization.*" Our formula attempts to express a conception of something back of consciousness, and operating more generally than in facts of consciousness. Whether this philosophical conceit is defensible or not is unessential for the remainder of our analysis. All that is strictly necessary for sociology proper is the later analysis, which might be performed in terms of "interest," either in our own or in the psychological sense, or of "desires" in a more empirical sense. Indeed, the latter is the method to be applied in the following discussion.

the series of events between the latent existence of human interests, and the achievement of partial satisfaction. Human interests, then, are the ultimate terms of calculation in sociology. On the human side the whole life-process, whether viewed in its individual or in its social phase, is at last the process of developing, adjusting, and satisfying interests.

Two corollaries are suggested. They anticipate later stages of the argument, but it may be well to record them before they can be developed in detail. First, if we accept the foregoing descriptions as our formal expression of the social universal, we have in the reality so formulated a prescription of sociological tasks, and less directly of methods. Our problems are to classify and interpret human activities in terms of the desires that stimulate them. Deeper philosophical problems at once come within the field of view in this connection, viz., tasks of interpreting the activities so analyzed in terms of the substratum of the desires which we have called interests. As sociologists, however, our competence does not extend into this field. Second, if the whole life-reality is the development, adjustment, and satisfaction of desires, the last standard of measure that we can apply in our judgments of conduct values is the effect of any activity in question upon the integrity of the process so described. Here is the clue to the ethics immanent in sociology. Conduct is good or bad in accordance with its value in promoting or retarding the total process of developing, balancing, and satisfying the desires potentially present among the associated persons. We judge that conduct to be good which seems likely to promote more than it hinders, or more than an available alternative would promote, all of this life-process which we are able to consider at one time. Conduct whose effect on the whole, considered by itself or in comparison with the effect of possible substitutes, is presumed to make against the going-on of this process we call bad. Our working scale of moral values is implicitly a record of the best estimates we have been able to form of the relative utility of different sorts of conduct for this life-process.

These corollaries will be elaborated in their proper place in our argument. Meanwhile the next chapter will proceed to

analyze the individual known to our experience, in terms of the universal desires. It will appear that there is positive justification of the formulas proposed, quite independent of our hazards in metaphysics.

ALBION W. SMALL.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

[*To be continued.*]