

SOCIOLOGY AND THE STATE

LESTER F. WARD
Brown University

I

Sociology must be something very bad because it is so much like vice. Most of those who hated it at first sight now embrace it and the rest are either in the enduring or the pitying stage.

As in the case of nearly all other sciences sociology was at first attacked and called a "pseudo-science." The sociologist is perfectly familiar with this, and it has ceased to trouble him. He has been hearing it from Lorenz Stein, Dilthey, Maurice Block, Bernheim, Lehmann, Treitschke, Martini, Van der Rest, and Leslie Stephen. They all say the same things, nothing more and nothing new. Some pains were taken at first to show that there were vast fields which no other science has ever touched or can touch without becoming sociology. But the need of sociology was so great and so keenly felt that there ceased to be any call to defend it. The people of all countries actually demanded the new science. None of the other sciences held out any hope of furnishing a theoretical and scientific basis for the study of the social problems of the day. Political economy had become a sort of quietism, and bade the people hush and cease to disturb the established order. But the people would not hush, and the unrest grew. Economics then vaulted over to the Austrian theory of value, which is a sociological principle, and then pretended that it had always been the "master science." Political science floundered about among a thousand fine-spun and wholly improbable theories of the state. It was both politically and socially hopeless.

When at last a science of both human origins and human welfare rose on the horizon it was immediately welcomed as that which had been so long looked for. Launched by Comte and fathered by John Stuart Mill, it moved, though at first slowly.

Accepted by Herbert Spencer and recognized by several strong continental writers, it got on its feet during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and before the beginning of the twentieth century it had become the most popular of all the sciences. It began to be taught in one after another of the higher institutions of learning, and at the present time it seems there are about four hundred such in the United States alone in which sociology forms a part of the curriculum.¹ Something analogous to this is true in other countries but I cannot quote any recent statistics.²

Perhaps the surest index of the growth of sociology and of the hold it has taken of all enlightened nations is the number of sociological societies that have sprung into existence during the period under consideration. Inaugurated by the formation of the International Institute of Sociology in 1893, followed by the Sociological Society of Paris in 1895, the movement spread to Brussels where the Belgian Sociological Society was founded in 1899, transformed into the Belgian Institute of Sociology in 1901, between which dates in 1900 there was founded at Budapest the Hungarian Society of Sociology. A Laboratory of Sociology was established at Palermo in 1901 and an Institute of Sociology at Madrid in the same year. In 1903 England fell into line and the Sociological Society of London was born. Our own American Sociological Society arose in 1905. Austria awoke in 1907 and produced the Soziologische Gesellschaft at Vienna, and on the occasion of the retirement of Professor Gumplowicz from his chair in the University of Gratz in 1908 a sociological society was founded there in his honor. That same year saw the rise of two more sociological societies in Hungary, viz., at Nagyvarad and at Györ, and it was also in 1908 that the Institute of Sociology was founded at Catania. Finally, during the present year of 1909 the contagion reached Germany, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie was in-

¹ *Amer. Journ. Sociol.*, Vol. XV, September, 1909, p. 165.

² An idea of the extent of this movement in 1900 may be gained from the report of the Congress for Instruction in the Social Sciences at the Paris Exposition of 1900. I condensed it for the U. S. Bureau of Education in chap. xxviii of the Report of the Bureau for the year 1899-1900, pp. 1458-1564; since published in full in book form.

augurated at Berlin on January 3. It was also in January of this year that the sociological Society of Birmingham was founded. Such is a bare enumeration, perhaps incomplete, of this movement for the scientific study of society.

The teaching of sociology in the great universities and its discussion before these learned bodies are paralleled by the activity of the press, both through the establishment of special organs devoted to it and through the writing of books on the subject by able authors in all countries. Any attempt to enumerate these would carry me far beyond the limits of this paper.

What are we to conclude from all this? Is the whole world, then, insane and chasing an *ignis fatuus*, a pseudo-science? I would be the last to fall back upon the old doctrines of *vox populi* and *quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, as proofs of anything. Many grave errors have been long popular and well-nigh universal. But have any of the sciences had to be abandoned as false? Yes, they say, and point to alchemy. But alchemy was rather an art. There is a sort of social alchemy, and sociology is the social chemistry whose mission it is to supplant it. Society is a domain of natural phenomena, and there must be a science to deal with it. There was no such science till sociology came. It is not the same as the science of man (anthropology); it is not the same as the science of wealth (economics); it is not the same as the science of government and the state (political science). In a certain sense these all belong to sociology, or fall under it, as furnishing its data. They are special social sciences, and there are many more, but they do not, separately or together, constitute sociology. Sociology has been called the synthesis of all the special social sciences. It is that, but it is more. It gathers material from fields not included in any recognized science, but its great work is the co-ordination of all social facts, and the elaboration of a reasoned and systematized body of knowledge relating to social origins, social processes, social development, and social causation.

Notwithstanding the recruits that sociology is constantly receiving from all sides and the general silencing of adverse criticism by the logic of events, there ever and anon arises a new voice from some quarter reiterating the old cry that sociology is

a pseudo-science. This, as we have seen, is of little consequence. Sociology has much more serious obstacles to overcome. It would be strange if among the hundreds of writers who have been attracted to this field there should not be some who would say foolish things. There is, for example, quite a large school of sociologists, who, though claiming to be such, are virtually denying that sociology is a science. Anyone who denies the existence of efficient causes in society does this. It does not mend matters to say that society is a domain of final causes. Final causes are nothing but the appropriation of efficient causes by intelligent beings.³ Of course sociology employs telic methods, and so does every other science. They are the only methods of which the intellect is capable. The higher mind works through final causes only. Telic is synonymous with intellectual. But in sociology as in all other true sciences, the mind deals with real things—the properties of matter and the forces of nature. Psychic forces are as real and natural as physical forces. In society psychic forces become social forces, and they are the true causes of all social phenomena. The virtual denial of this truth on the part of persons classed as sociologists, is doing sociology far more harm than all that the enemies of the science can do it. Several European sociologists must be so classed, as Ludwig Stein, Draghicesco, and Rivera. Nor are they wanting in America; at least passages may be cited to that effect, for example, by Dr. Small,⁴ Professor Ellwood,⁵ and Professor Hayes.⁶ If the sociologists themselves admit that sociology is a pseudo-science how can we expect the enemies of sociology to see it in any better light?

I do not propose here to repeat any of my own proofs of the strictly scientific character of sociology when properly understood. My entire contribution to the subject consists essentially in heaping up these proofs. But I take pleasure in referring to Professor Giddings's papers on "Social Causation," as showing

³ *Pure Sociology*, chap. xvi.

⁴ *Am. Journ. Sociol.*, Vol. V, pp. 811, 812.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 341 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 633; XII, pp. 654, 834.

that not all Americans vacillate on this essential point. I may also be allowed to quote one Old World author, of whom fate has so recently and tragically robbed us, and this from the last book he ever wrote, the one he referred to as his *Schwannengesang*,⁷ and which he probably never saw after it issued from the press. I refer to the posthumous little *Sozialphilosophie im Umriß* of Ludwig Gumplowicz, a copy of which reached me on November 22 last through the kindness of his son, Dr. Wladyslaw Gumplowicz, of Vienna. On pp. 6-9 of this work he says:

We live in the state and in society; we belong to a social circle which jostles against its members and is jostled by them; we feel the social pressure from all sides and we react against it with all our might; we experience a restraint to our free activities and we struggle to remove it; we require the services of other men which we cannot do without; we pursue our own interests and struggle for the interests of other social groups, which are also our interests. In short, we move in a world which we do not control, but which controls us, which is not directed toward us and adapted to us, but toward which we must direct and adapt ourselves. . . .

Modern science knows the laws according to which the heavenly bodies move; it knows the laws of life of all organic beings; it knows the laws of the attraction, repulsion, and combination of atoms. What does it know of the social world? Nothing. In the world-conception of modern science this most distinctive human world is absent. There is no trace or intimation even of the laws of its movement in the prevailing philosophy of nature. This world does not exist for it. . . . That the will of man is controlled by his social environment, by the social group to which he belongs, in which he inheres and must inhere, that this influence is so exactly determined that we can calculate in advance the decisions of the wills of individuals from their social position and group attachments—of all this the modern philosopher of nature takes no notice; these factors which the phenomena of will call forth, do not exist for him. He knows only the organico-physical forces which set the human will in motion, The social environment of man with its impulses and suggestions, its coercion and compulsion, which determine the wills of individuals, these "forces" are as unknown to him as is the social world itself.

This final message of the author of the *Struggle of Races* fittingly supplements the splendid presentation by Dr. Ross of

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. XV, November, 1909, pp. 412, 413.

the great law of *Social Control*, and forces home to us anew the truth that sociology has to do with energy as certainly as astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology. But this is only one side of the subject. It relates to the static aspect only. The dynamic aspect is even more striking and more important. To treat of that here would be but to repeat what I have been saying for thirty years.

II

On several occasions I have attempted to show that the tendency of sociology has been to seek to narrow it down to some one principle supposed to be adequate to embrace the whole field, and that there are many such principles, each of which is so regarded by some one writer or some school of writers. When I made my principal contribution⁸ to this aspect of the subject in 1902, and discussed twelve such principles, all of which belong to sociology and constitute important factors in the completed science, no one had distinctly claimed that political science was the great comprehensive discipline, and that the whole field now usually embraced by the science of sociology falls under the single conception of the state. Such a claim has recently been made, and to it a moment's attention may now be given.

There is a doctrine usually ascribed to Comte and defended by a considerable number of sociologists, which has been sometimes called "objectification." Its chief form consists in declaring that society is the only reality, and that the individual is an abstraction. Comte is supposed to have said this but he only said that the man is an abstraction, and that there is nothing real but humanity.⁹ The doctrine is metaphysical enough in any form, and it is such doctrines as this that have done most to discredit sociology in the eyes of scientific men. They judge all sociologists by the few who maintain such views, and the open enemies of the science have made the most of this.

⁸ "Contemporary Sociology," *Amer. Journ. Sociol.*, Vol. VII, pp. 475-500, 629-58, 749-62; *Soziologie von Heute* (Uebersetzung aus dem Englischen) Innsbruck, 1904.

⁹ *Philosophie positive*, 3d edition, 1869, Vol. VI, p. 590.

We now have a new form of this doctrine of objectification, differing in nothing from the old forms, except that instead of humanity or society being called the only reality it is the state that is so regarded. The distinction between society and the state, however, is not clearly drawn, as may be seen from the following passage, which embodies the theory:

Instead of the genesis of society from individuals, what has taken place is the genesis of individuals from society; . . . man did not make the state but the state made man . . . it is an institution that existed before the human species was formed and was the instrument by which the human species was developed; . . . the state includes society just as any entity includes all its parts.¹⁰

The author of this remarkable theory claims to be an orthodox Darwinian, and calls most sociologists anti-Darwinian, including those who are biological specialists and have sought to show the non-biological sociologists what Darwin really taught. It is a pity therefore that he could not have been contemporary with the great biologist in order to have told him how "species" were formed and developed, at least the "human species." That the "state" underlies the origin of species would certainly have been new to Darwin. That this "institution" is not confined to the "human species," but is of earlier animal origin, is, however, made clear in other passages, for example:

The state [which is here called a genus!], an integration that took place in the animal stock ancestral to the human species. All existing forms of the state have been evolved from primordial forms existing anterior to the formation of the human species. The state is the unit, of which all social structure and individual human existence are the differentiation. The state is a psychic unity and it is apprehensible only as it is objectified in institutions.¹¹

Now certain sociologists have proposed some highly metaphysical and even absurd theories, and have "objectified" humanity and society in ways that would have pleased a Scaliger, but none of them have ever approached this new doctrine as a specimen of mediaeval ontology. Yet its author is one of those who characterize sociology as a "pseudo-science" that has made a

¹⁰ *Amer. Journ. Sociol.*, Vol. XV, September, 1909, p. 248.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

"false start." In his first attack upon it, published in a newspaper, and containing low appeals to popular prejudice, he simply repeated the old charges that have been so often made by the authors named at the beginning of this paper, and I was surprised that any answer was thought necessary. But the answer made him familiar with the face of the monster and lured him on to express his pity in a second attack, much subdued, in which at last he showed his colors, and advanced the astounding theory above stated. He has thus been good enough to tell the sociologists what they should have done and what a true "start" would have been. What might not sociology have been if it had only made this true start!

The comedy of all this lies in the fact that we now have a rational theory of the state. Morgan taught us in 1878 that political society supervened upon tribal society in Greece and Rome in the sixth century before Christ, and that it does not exist in most of the outlying races of men. Nothing that can be called a state exists in gentile society, and the state is a comparatively late factor in social evolution. Gumpłowicz and Ratzenhofer have shown us just how the state arose as a consequence of race amalgamation. The ethnological and sociological proofs, although independently arrived at, harmonize completely and furnish us with the true natural history of the state. They teach us the origin in comparatively recent times of political society, states, and nations, as the result of prolonged struggles followed by periods of social and political equilibration and assimilation.

The state is the most important of all human institutions, and it is doubtless a recognition of this truth that has led to the innumerable attempts to explain its origin and nature. Some of the theories put forth may contain germs of truth, but the greater part of them are utterly worthless, as embodying no principle capable of explaining anything. Every writer imagined himself competent to formulate a theory of the state. I made bold to enter the lists in my initial work,¹² which appeared in 1883. I was culpably ignorant of Morgan's great work published five

¹² *Dynamic Sociology*, Vol. I, pp. 464-67; Vol. II, pp. 212 ff.

years earlier, and Gumpłowicz's *Rassenkampf* appeared the same year as my own book. Of course I knew nothing of his pamphlet, *Race und Staat*, 1875, which contains a clear statement of the principle. My guess was perhaps as good as the average, but was wide of the mark, and in the light of the great Austrian theory and of the ethnological proofs I do not hesitate to repudiate it and remand it to the same limbo as all the rest.

I would not have mentioned this had not this new interpreter of the state singled it out (instead of quoting *Pure Sociology*, chap. x, published twenty years later) and held it up as my theory of the state. This procedure may be compared with that of the Spanish court-martial in condemning Ferrer at fifty for what he said at twenty. It would of course be useless to argue with one who resorts to such methods, and I wished only to show that of all the worthless theories of the state that have been set afloat the theory proposed by him is the most absurd. To it Tully's famous saying perfectly applies: *Nescio quomodo, nihil tam absurde dici potest, quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum*.