

## SOCIAL SCIENCE

SOCIAL science has already secured wide interest, and the forms in which this interest has manifested itself are as varied as they are numerous. In this article we shall concentrate on one central idea: the need of co-ordination of the vast amount of literature on social problems. The need of some such co-ordination is urgent. Ever since the publication of the Papal Encyclicals on Social Order, pamphlets and books have become so numerous that the student of social science might be alarmed at the number of works he must peruse in order to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of the literature of his subject.

It is very much to be regretted that no work exists that can be considered an exhaustive and scientific treatise on social science. The lack of such a treatise makes serious study of this subject too complex a task. Pamphlets and short treatises on particular problems are useful, but they can never be satisfactory from a scientific point of view; they are of necessity sketchy, and therefore inadequate. There is, moreover, a great danger that quantities of unrelated material will beget confusion of thought and smother enthusiasm. Consequently any attempt to give to the study of social science a scientific basis by stating and co-ordinating its principles is to be welcomed, and the more so when it is made by authors who are gifted with clarity of thought and who despite specialization keep in mind the larger view of a complete social science.

The *Précis de Sociologie* is the fruit of close collaboration.<sup>1</sup> The essays, as thorough and substantiated as we may expect in a *Précis*, are confined to Sociology: the family, economic life, political life, religion, art and science. It is their special merit that they are based on full agreement as to the principles that determine the functions of the

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<sup>1</sup>*Précis de Sociologie*. By R. Lemonnier, O.P., J. Tonneau, O.P., and R. Troude. With Introduction by J. T. Delos, O.P. Publiroc, Marseilles; 25 frs.

various branches of social science; principles that are admirably expounded in the Introduction.

In calling their book *Précis de Sociologie*, the writers assume that we understand by sociology that particular branch of social science which observes, describes and classifies social phenomena without considering whether those phenomena are consonant with the moral law. Taken in this sense sociology is a particular science with clearly-marked boundaries. It ceases to be a *normative* science, for it is confined to the observation and description of social facts and it analyses these facts in order to obtain an adequate knowledge of the various factors that went to their production.

Yet some normative science of society remains necessary. The consideration of social facts is not sufficient to establish those laws that secure the peace and order of society. These laws can be established only when we have grasped what society is and how it is to achieve its purpose. A knowledge of man and his capacities must be presupposed if we are to establish the nature and functions of social institutions, the family and the State. For the conception of the State is corollary to a conception of man and his destiny. Such a normative science is, however, *social philosophy*; it is not *sociology*. It requires an adequate knowledge of the life of societies, of the sources of social movements, of the repercussions on them of external factors. And therefore parallel with it there is another science which restricts itself to the observation, the description and the classification of social facts.

To realize the need of such a descriptive science we have only to consider the nature of a *social fact*. Social facts are real; they are not just mental constructions which have no existence in reality, a mere synthesis of individual facts. For society is not simply an aggregate of individuals. If we are to identify the social unit with the multiplied individual we should consider a line as a juxtaposed series of points or a piece of music as a chain of notes. It is true the piece of music presupposes the juxtaposition of notes, but it is not identical with it. Similarly, social facts are some-

thing more than the multiplication of the results of individual activity.

Collective emotions—a good example of which is the feeling of intense patriotism that gave birth to the Hitler-State—are something more than the mere juxtaposition of individual emotions. An emotion is collective, not because it is simultaneously felt by a number of independent individuals, but because its cause and its term guide them in accordance with the same rules and, creating between them a bond of unison, produce unity of action. And yet both cause and term remain extrinsic to the individuals who experience that emotion.

Thus to revert to our example. Nazism is a collective emotion. For the sake of argument its cause may be assumed to be Hitler's personality and ideals. Its term is presumably a Reich built on Nazi principles. Now these two elements are different from the reaction they evoke in particular Nazis. Nazism is not simply a combination of the personal feelings of individual Nazis, but something exterior to them which inspires and guides them in their work for the common cause. Yet Nazism is a reality. It is not just a fictitious ideal. It exists and requires explanation. In other words, Nazism is a social fact.

From this it is clear that social facts cannot be analyzed solely by the study of individual activities. There is always present an objective element, something extra-individual, that causes and explains these social phenomena. The social facts, therefore, require a special science which observes, describes and classifies them. This task is assigned to *Sociology*.

But a question arises. Can the mere observation and classification of social facts be the function of a science? Science implies the knowledge of causes. The knowledge of facts does not constitute a science. The answer to this question can only be found in an analysis of the causes of a social fact, for if sociology can truly be said to be a knowledge of the causes of a social fact then it can claim to be an autonomous science.

A social relationship unites two or more individuals in virtue of an object or end and since the association is made for a particular purpose it demands special conditions for its fulfilment. For example, a hockey-team is composed of a number of individual hockey players. They join that team for a specific purpose: playing the game of hockey, and in order to make this game possible they submit themselves to definite rules. Similarly every society is an organic whole resulting from a union of individuals in virtue of an end which is its *raison d'être* and which provides the key to the understanding of all its social manifestations. Yet it is not always easy to distinguish the purpose of a society and the motives of the individuals adhering to it. The individual is active in society under two different aspects. As an individual he makes decisions that are personal to him: he has his personal motives, his personal outlook. As a member of the social group his actions find their purpose in the realization of the ideals of his society.

Now to analyse a particular social phenomenon with due regard to its historical setting is precisely the scope of sociology. Sociology therefore can rightly claim to be an autonomous science because it does not restrict itself to the enumeration of social facts, but analyses their causes, more especially the final cause to which in the last resort they owe their social character. Yet it is concerned only with particular social facts, not with the laws that control them, and it is therefore distinct from social philosophy, the philosophy of *collective being* (*être collectif*).<sup>1</sup> But if social philosophy is distinct from sociology it is also distinct from social ethics. Like metaphysics, it is a science of *being* analysing the determinant laws, laws which are norms without being moral laws.

The parallel functions of social philosophy and sociology may be illustrated by those of empirical and rational psychology. Rational psychology is not opposed to empirical psychology; it is its complement. But while empirical

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. Tonneau, O.P., *Bulletin de Philosophie. Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, May 1934, pp. 293 sq.

## SOCIAL SCIENCE

psychology analyses psychological phenomena in their manifestations, rational psychology deals with more fundamental and universal laws, for it is only concerned with the principles that underlie all psycho-physical interactions. Social philosophy therefore will envisage the very nature of society and of social activities. Such a social philosophy has yet to be constructed, its elements exist but are scattered through works on sociology, on social history, on ethnology. There still remains the task of gathering these elements and of co-ordinating them into a complete doctrine of society which will be based on an analysis of the nature either of society in general or of a particular society with its social activities and customs.

It is of even greater importance to realise the distinction between sociology and social ethics. Sociology is no longer concerned with what society *should be* but with what it *is*, and so has definitely left the domain of ethics. Yet until now social ethics as a science has been practically non-existent, for unless we consider the social fact as something distinct from a mere aggregate of individual facts, social ethics cannot be distinguished from personal ethics. If we regard the social fact as a mere mental construction without objective reality then social ethics cannot claim to be an autonomous science. In distinguishing social ethics from sociology we do not isolate them. They remain intimately connected but need not for that reason fuse into one science.

Individual human actions are considered by psychology; but individual human actions in the concrete, though not identical with their morality, are nevertheless so closely linked with it that they can never evade the sanction of moral laws. Similarly, though sociology remains distinct from social ethics, any society as a social fact is inevitably subject to the moral laws that govern human society in virtue of a common end. Thus it is the part of social ethics to determine which actions are expedient in virtue of the common good and, since it is part and parcel of man's nature that he should live in society, his personal good and the common good are linked. Man must seek the common

good if he is to achieve the end imposed on him by his nature. This ontological necessity which is rooted in the very nature of things entails moral obligations.

The connection between sociology and social ethics has great practical importance. Social ethics largely depends for moral judgements on sociology, for it can never judge the activities of the economic, the political and the national life fairly unless it recognises all that the various activities represent explicitly or by implication. Without this preliminary sociological knowledge social ethics can have no constructive value, for not until this connection of sociology with social ethics is realised will moralists be able to gauge the full bearing of social phenomena. But when sociologists and moralists alike realise more clearly the mutual dependence of sociology and social ethics, they will become more discriminating in their judgments and more balanced in their attempts at social reform. For their efforts will be guided by a scientific knowledge which derives from the consideration of facts in the light of the principles that must control all social activities.

The term 'social science,' then, is generic and covers all the sciences that deal either directly or indirectly with social phenomena. But among them there are three that are predominant: Sociology which analyses and describes social facts; Social Philosophy which deals with fundamental laws of society, and finally Social Ethics which establishes the laws that govern social conduct. Social ethics may either restrict itself to the natural order and base its laws on right reason or consider social life in the supernatural order and establish its laws on faith and charity. The recognition of such distinctions is the necessary preliminary to co-ordination, and unless co-ordination is achieved the study of social science will only beget confusion, much unbalanced teaching, and no lasting results.

BONAVENTURE PERQUIN, O.P.