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# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF SOCIETY

An Outline of Primary Factors  
And Fundamental Institutions

BY

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Classes of 1926-7 and 1927-8  
In grateful acknowledgment of  
their inspiring interest and helpful criticism



## PREFACE

This work is especially planned to give the student beginning his college work in sociology the broad background necessary for the advantageous pursuit of advanced courses. It is the author's hope that it may give to the base course in sociology somewhat the same unity and systematic survey of fundamentals which elementary texts in economics give to a neighboring field. That there is need for such a work is shown by the present experimentation with various types of introductory courses. It is shown also by the wide feeling among teachers of sociology that there is an essential background of fact and theory which the student must have in order to carry on the study of advanced courses with profit, but which can now be gotten only by the use of long and varied reference lists. This book is based frankly on the belief that a broad introductory course is preferable, as a first course, either to the problems course or to the more specialized course dealing with one type of sociological interpretation.

Sociology departments are more and more frequently offering introductory courses in the sophomore year, or even in the freshman year. The material here presented is designed for such courses. It has been used for several years with large classes, of whom about two-thirds have been sophomores, the remainder, juniors and seniors.

In the light of this experience the contents of this work have been so shaped as to meet the requirements of two classes of students. There are, first, those who plan to major in sociology and wish a preliminary survey of the field. There are, secondly, those with major studies in other subjects, who wish some insight into human origins and institutions in their general aspects. It is believed that a careful perusal of the following pages will give to the latter some insight into those social facts, theories, and problems which are most worth while for intellectual breadth and general culture.

At the same time it will give those entering upon a more extended study of sociology the necessary background for realistic,

and hence profitable, thinking regarding social processes and problems.

Such a preliminary survey has become a genuine necessity. The college curriculum is now so crowded that the student of the social sciences, and of sociology in particular, cannot postpone his first work in the field until he has had all the desirable preliminary courses in geography, biology, and psychology. Teachers in this field are, in fact, finding it necessary to present their beginning students with some of the pertinent materials from these basic sciences. The outlines presented in this work should be supplemented with appropriate references and class discussions, in order to make them clear, to avoid dogmatism based on singleness of viewpoint, and to give further insight into their significance for group life. To this end, reading and reference lists and type questions have been appended to each chapter.

The study begins with some consideration of the pitfalls of bias and the characteristics and significance of the evolutionary viewpoint. Then comes a study of the origin of man and of his diversification into races. After a brief transition chapter, we enter upon a survey of the primary factors in social life, the geographical, the biological, the psychological, and the cultural. Then follows another transition chapter dealing with certain essential concepts, such as community, society, and institution. Thereafter are studied the fundamental social arrangements whereby man has solved the major problems of living together in groups, namely, material culture; myth, magic, religion, and science; the family; and the state. This is admittedly a wide field, but experience has shown that it can be covered, with very gratifying results, in a three-hour course throughout the year.

Such a survey is, however, an immense task, and only partial success can be claimed for the effort here made to encompass it. It is, on the other hand, quite worth the effort. To see social life as a whole, to see the trends of cultural evolution, to gain insight into those basic conditions which control the further evolution of culture, and thus to gain some understanding of their significance for the future welfare of nation and of humanity, these are the ultimate goals of all learning. As one surveys the pages of history, he sees the rise and fall of great civilizations, and wonders why. He observes changes in the character of social institutions and again wonders what has brought them about and what may

be their significance for human welfare and social efficiency. Quite probably we shall never have complete answers to these and similar questions, for the boundaries of human knowledge seem to be ever receding. But we can arrive at some understanding of where the civilization we share came from, why it has its present form, what are the main factors and forces operating upon and within it, and what is the general direction of its further development.

In this introductory volume we attempt only preliminary answers to these ambitious questions. If we succeed in showing the student that final answers are not easy, that popular answers are mainly the product of tradition and of the rationalization of present interests, and that scientific research in the social sciences promises more for the future of humanity than any other activity now open to human talent, we shall have abundantly justified such an intellectual excursion as this book undertakes.

To scholars in this field, the author's numerous obligations will be abundantly evident. The references throughout the book are ever present reminders of that fact. The material has grown and taken form during several years of teaching it. In both form and arrangement it has profited immensely from the thoughtful criticisms and suggestions of the students of the classes to whom it is dedicated. It was their enthusiastic encouragement that led to its appearance in book form. During the past year the substance of these chapters has been used in classes by Professor Donald R. Taft, formerly of Wells College, and by Professor Ivan E. McDougle of Goucher College. I am deeply obligated to both of them, and especially to the former, for numerous suggestions, both as to matter and as to form. I am under similar obligations to Miss Mildred Hartsough, who has most ably assisted in the introductory course at Smith College. The preparation of the "Index" by my son Robert greatly relieved the pressure of work in its final stages. Above all, I am indebted to my wife, who not only has read the entire proof, but has assisted in countless other ways in what proved to be a somewhat arduous, though agreeable, task.

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Northampton, Mass.,  
June, 1928.





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