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COOLEY: A PERSPECTIVE

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When *Human Nature and the Social Order*[1] was first published, in 1902, the reviewer for the *American Journal of Sociology* said of it: "The volume is something of an anomaly in sociological literature, but it is none the less welcome for its very non-conformity."[2] One has only to go back to the works of the most influential of Cooley's contemporaries, particularly Ward and Giddings, to understand what the reviewer meant. These sociologists were obsessed by questions about the province and proper subject-matter of sociology; about the relation of sociology to the other social sciences; and about the essential principle of human society which distinguished it from animal life. Their writings, especially those of Ward, were voluminous, and packed with complex but not very arresting formulations designed to answer these questions. Whatever good ideas they had were hidden beneath a cloak of obscure expressions and concepts. It is hard to find passages in their books which communicate any sense of the America in which they lived. Although both Ward and Giddings, but particularly the latter, advocated the importance of social research, their own activities fitted the stereotype of the "armchair" sociologist.

In spirit and intent, Cooley's work was different. Where Ward and Giddings were systematic, he was casual. His talents as a writer outshone even his ability as an observer and thinker. Cooley's books are concerned with behavior in the full range of human societies, but nevertheless one gains from them considerable insight into the structure of the family, the role of children, the place of the church and the personalities of businessmen in the America of his day. Compared to the number of Ward's and Giddings' publications, Cooley's writings are few. The two works recently reprinted, with the addition of *Social Process,* published in 1918, are the only full-length books he wrote.[3]

Many of the questions which so bothered his contemporaries in American sociology were of no importance to Cooley; or if they did interest him, his answers to them were usually different from those given by Ward and Giddings. Cooley believed that the subject-matter of sociology was either "personal intercourse considered in its primary aspects—the development of human nature—or in its secondary aspects, such as groups, institutions and processes." To this state-

[1] A revised edition of this book was published in 1922. This edition, and *Social Organization,* Cooley's second major work originally published in 1909, have recently been reprinted in a single volume: *The Two Major Works of Charles H. Cooley,* Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1956. Robert Cooley Angell has contributed an introduction to the volume.

[2] George E. Vincent, Review of "Human Nature and the Social Order," *American Journal of Sociology,* 8 (January, 1903), pp. 559–563.

[3] Although published as a book, *Life and the Student* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1927), is a collection of comments from Cooley's journals.

ment, as if to indicate his disdain for the fashion of indulging in elaborate definitions of sociology, he added the following sentence: "Sociology, *I suppose,* is the science of these things." [4] The disdain which Cooley felt for these efforts of his contemporaries arose from his conviction that social life was so rich in problems and phenomena calling for observation and comment that it was a waste of energy to worry about defining what *ought* to be studied. His relation to society and to sociology was spontaneous.

Cooley often thought about the relation of sociology to the other social sciences, and his answers always were revealed in studies of specific problems. Giddings would speculate about whether sociology was a special social science or a generalized science under which all the other social disciplines should be subsumed; Cooley would write an essay criticizing some of the preconceptions of economic analysis.[5] He never tried to defend the existence of sociology as an autonomous discipline. The gap between Cooley and his contemporaries in this respect probably had two sources. Giddings and Ward—and others—modeled their image of sociology on the natural sciences: it was important for them to show that the logic of the sociological approach was comparable to these sciences. Although Cooley's graduate training was in economics, he inclined toward the humanities and measured the achievement of sociology in terms of its superiority to purely literary analysis. From the beginning of his teaching career, Cooley felt accepted by his academic colleagues. Ward, however, suffered considerable personal privation before becoming established as a sociologist; and Giddings, even after he was invited in 1894 to fill the first chair in sociology at Columbia, was involved in persistent struggles to build up his department against the opposition of colleagues in the other social sciences.

Ward and Giddings grew up in a milieu in which Social Darwinism was the dominant intellectual force. In Ward's case this orientation was accentuated by the fact that he began professional life as a paleobotanist. Neither one of these men was ever able to overcome these early influences, in the sense that both continued to use biological concepts and both felt one of the crucial tests of sociology was the extent to which social life could be explained without recourse to biology. Their personal intellectual histories, in other words, help to explain why both Ward and Giddings were so obsessed by the need to discover the essence of social organization which distinguished it from animal life. Cooley never could become interested in this problem—in part, because he identified himself with literary figures and philosophers, but also because his thought, like that of his teacher at the University of Michigan, John Dewey, sprang from philosophical idealism. Once Giddings isolated what he believed to be the essential principle of human society—"consciousness of kind"—he tended to use derivations of this concept to account for cultural variability. To Cooley, this was an illustration of "particularism" which, he said, "consists in attending to only one factor in a complex whole." [6] Cooley considered "particularism" one of the major intellectual fallacies of sociological analysis and his criticism of it became increasingly intense.

Would Cooley still be an anomaly among sociologists if he were alive and writing today? I believe he would, but for other qualities of his work than those which distinguished him from his contemporaries. Cooley was a deviant because he eschewed those questions about the nature of sociology that obsessed Ward and Giddings. But in our time most sociologists would agree with Cooley's view of these issues, and scholars who share the concerns which dominated Ward and Giddings are the exceptions. Sociologists have resolved the question of their proper subject-matter. In part, they have achieved this resolution by studying social institutions which are largely ignored by the older social sciences, like the family, the church and the social stratification system; and, in part, because they now attend to the myriad problems of social life which emerged with mass democracy and

[4] *Human Nature and the Social Order,* New York: Charles Scribner, 1922, revised edition, p. 135. The italics are mine.

[5] Cf. "Political Economy and Social Process" in *Sociological Theory and Social Research, Being Selected Papers of Charles H. Cooley,* New York: Henry Holt, 1930.

[6] *Human Nature and the Social Order,* revised edition, p. 26.

bureaucratic organization, such as minority group relations, primary groups, and leadership and communication. Incidentally, many of these problems were first discussed in American sociological literature by Cooley. The concentration of sociological research on problems not dealt with by the other social sciences has made it easier for sociologists to ignore the question of the relation of sociology to economics, to politics and to history. Furthermore, much of the sociological perspective has been incorporated into economics and political science. Given these conditions, it seems irrelevant to raise the issue whether sociology is a special or a general social science. In fact, Talcott Parsons, who is probably the most eminent of present-day social theorists, asserts a view which represents the extreme opposite to that of Ward and Giddings. He suggests not only that sociology is a special science, but it is so special that it deals with a single component of social institutions. Neither is it any longer incumbent upon the sociologist to defend his view that human society is so different from animal society that a separate discipline is required to deal with it. Sociology is too well established within the universities for such an argument to make any headway. And, of course, there have been changes in the general intellectual climate. Especially since World War II, Americans have rebelled against that kind of biological determinism and materialism which were such important influences on ideas and social action in the United States, beginning with the period of the Social Darwinists. The orientation of the intellectual *avant-garde* is now more sympathetic to a religious view of life, in which man is defined as unique among the animals and close to God. Paradoxical as it may seem, I believe that sociology has gained a certain support from this development, in so far as it now is assumed that human behavior cannot be explained in the same terms as animal life.

What would be the sources of Cooley's anomalous status were he alive today? There is, for example, his lack of faith in the prospects for building a rigorous social science. He believed that "the dramatic and intuitive perceptions that underlie social knowledge are so individual, so subjective, that we cannot expect that men will be able to agree upon them or build them up into an increasing structure of ascertained truth." [7] There are many critics of sociology who would subscribe to this statement. So would those who regard sociology as an offshoot of the humanities or who identify themselves with social reform movements. Among the leaders of the profession, however, or among the younger generation trained at the main centers of graduate education, it would be hard to find anyone willing publicly to espouse such a view.

Cooley's rejection of the prospects of a rigorous sociology is reflected in his limited capacities as a theoretician. It was comparatively difficult for him to set forth a theoretical view, then to sustain and elaborate it, and finally to carry it through to completion. As Cooley grew older, he became increasingly unable to think in this way. In *Human Nature and the Social Order,* for instance, he sustains a single idea for the duration of a chapter of thirty to forty pages. When *Social Organization* was written, only seven years later, his thoughts took on the quality of meditations—to such an extent that a contemporary reviewer spoke of the book as a compilation of "notes." By the time *Social Process* was published, in 1918, this character of his mind had become more marked; it is therefore the most uneven and disappointing work in Cooley's trilogy.

Cooley's view of the nature of social theory coincided with his inability to sustain theoretical argumentation. He believed that the great danger with theory was that it would become too remote from life itself. Too much of social theory, Cooley felt, was like an argument by analogy: this was the principal reason why he distrusted Spencer's work. He accused Spencer of lacking "direct and authentic perception of the structure and movement of human life." [8] As Cooley put it: "To think well one must know how to reconcile system with spontaneity." [9]

It is necessary only to read the work of Parsons to appreciate how far Cooley's view is from the temper of theoretical activity in American sociology today. For Parsons, abstract ideas seem as much the real stuff with

[7] *Sociological Theory and Social Research,* p. 296.
[8] *Ibid.,* p. 269.
[9] *Life and the Student,* p. 116.

which the imagination works as were day-to-day events and concrete experiences for Cooley. Parsons exhibits no difficulty or embarrassment in setting forth a concept without offering a single illustration of it, then elaborating and reformulating the concept with infinite variations, again without giving the concept empirical content. Parsons is a true virtuoso of abstraction: almost every paragraph of *The Social System* is an interminable cadenza; with the instrument, Parsons' mind, and the score, the theory of action. This makes the reading of Parsons a tiring and often irritating task, although one cannot help but be amazed by the unusual talent for pure ratiocination which is being displayed. To relieve the irritation one must, in reading Parsons, do what is never necessary in reading Cooley, since Cooley does it for us: namely, to fill in the conceptual "boxes" with images of specific events or persons. This means that even those of Cooley's books which are longer in pages than Parsons' take less time to read and understand.[10]

The view of the nature of theory which is held by contemporary American sociologists mirrors their use of pure ratiocination. For many among them, theory can be constructed without resort to facts, except at the beginning of the process of theory-building, and again toward the end, when the generalization itself, or the hypotheses deduced from the theory, must be verified. There is a long intervening period during which new concepts and hypotheses can be formulated or deduced without so much as a glance toward the real world. This approach to theory building has become possible because of advances in the field of symbolic logic and mathematics which were unknown in Cooley's time.

Who among our contemporaries would say, as Cooley did, that "in endowment, Goethe was almost the ideal sociologist?"[11] Sociologists may not scorn literature and the arts—in the United States one is more likely to find humanists detesting sociology, since sociologists are taking over many of the functions once performed by teachers of literature in American society; but relatively few sociologists will feel they have much to learn about their problems from reading novels. Not so with Cooley. Colleagues calling at his home, especially during the last decade of his life, were "more likely to find him reading a French novel, or a book of literary criticism, art, travel or biography than a contemporary volume from the most recent sociological series."[12] Certainly, almost no sociologist uses the man of letters as his reference-group in the way that Cooley compared himself with Goethe, Emerson and Thoreau. A volume of extracts from Cooley's journals, published in 1927, two years before he died, includes numerous short commentaries on various historical figures, but not a single sociologist is discussed. He mentions one person who could be considered a social scientist, Tocqueville, and then only if the definition of the discipline is extended far beyond its currently acceptable limits. The leaders of American sociology are no longer withdrawn, reflective men, likely to spend their whole lives, as Cooley did, in small university towns like the Ann Arbor of the 1890s. They are often men of action, planning complicated projects, supervising large staffs, expending vast sums of money, and consulting with industrialists and leaders in trade unions and government. If they do live in university communities, these are now cities. Ann Arbor today has a population of over 50,000.

The aspects of Cooley's work which distinguishes it most clearly from contemporary American sociology are, of course, the research techniques which he used for collecting data and the kinds of data on which he based his theoretical statements. In Cooley's earliest writings, such as his first published article—a study of the ecology of street railways—and his doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Michigan in 1894—called "The Theory of Transportation"—he made use of printed statistics which had been gathered by government officials in the course of their regular duties.

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[10] Riesman puts it another way. Referring to *The Social System,* he writes: ". . . the book would be shorter if it were longer in pages." David Riesman, "The Fitness of The Social System," *Psychiatry,* 15 (November, 1952), p. 480.

[11] Quoted in George H. Mead, "Cooley's Contribution to Social Thought," *American Journal of Sociology,* 35 (March, 1930), p. 694.

[12] Authur E. Wood, "Charles H. Cooley: An Appreciation," *American Journal of Sociology,* 35 (March, 1930), p. 702.

Later on, when he was accumulating material with which to compose *Human Nature and the Social Order,* Cooley undertook some systematic observations of his own children, sitting near them and noting their behavior, in order to record the growth of their self-conceptions. These "data"—statistical documents, observations of children or students, and especially his omnivorous reading of poems, autobiographies, essays and journals—constituted the principal sources of his ideas. So far as we know, he never attempted the type of research that defines American sociology today, which accumulates a wide range of original data through community studies, social surveys, and the like. One has the impression, however, that were Cooley alive now he would be attracted by many of the advances in research techniques of the last two decades, especially the use of participant observation. He would probably also sympathize with the intent of social surveys, even though he might advise us to beware of the project director who relied upon the reports of his interviewers and who did not go into the field himself to encounter his subjects face-to-face. Cooley was known to have made remarks in private scornful of statistics, to condemn the method as dealing only with "the outside of life." In his academic papers one finds that his appraisal of statistics is more judicious: he appreciated the control over data which it afforded. But he demanded that a sociologist, when citing results obtained through the use of the statistical method, should not forget to ask: "What does it mean?" Cooley added this qualification for the same reason that he would suspect the project director who was a "desk-chair" sociologist. He felt strongly that the only reliable kind of social knowledge is that which captured life in its full wholeness, as it was lived. Cooley's imaginative powers were so remarkable that he was able to sense this wholeness by reading books and reflecting on the common everyday experiences of himself, his family, his friends and students. There are interpreters of Cooley who have suggested that his reliance on books and personal impressions sprang from ideological commitment. A careful reading of his work shows otherwise. The source of his approach was rather the unique quality of mind and personality which enabled him to be creative without the panoply of data and techniques characteristic of sociology today.

If Cooley is so different from us, why do we bother to read him? Why does a leading publisher reprint two of Cooley's books, one issued first in 1902 and the other in 1909? Cooley's ideas are part of the living tradition of sociological thought. As sophisticated as sociologists may be, we cannot free ourselves entirely from an atavistic concern for the sources of our intellectual being. It is naturally interesting to read the original versions of ideas we now accept, such as the concept of the "looking-glass self," first discussed in *Human Nature and the Social Order;* or the concept of the "primary group," which Cooley presents early in the text of *Social Organization.* Our interest is multiplied when we discover that some of the ideas we associate with Cooley's name do not, in fact, appear in his works; for instance, that he nowhere uses the term secondary group or secondary relationship, although today the concept of primary group is never discussed apart from these ideas.[13]

Cooley's interest for us, however, is much more than historical. His work possesses an immediacy which transcends the fifty year period that separates us from him. He did not build up a special language and the words he uses evoke sentiments of sympathy in his readers at the same time that his thoughts prod our intellects. And he is almost contemporary in his concern with the decline of individualism in American life, the difficulties involved in maintaining primary ideals such as loyalty in a bureaucratized society, the strains on individual personalities produced by mass organizations, and the disorganization of family life.

Possibly Cooley's greatest achievement was to have anticipated in numerous details modern sociological theory. In general, when we review the sources of structure-functional analysis, we tend to recognize only its Euro-

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[13] In his graduate seminars Cooley did discuss groups which were non-primary but even there apparently he did not use the label "secondary." Cf. Edwin C. Jandy, *Charles Horton Cooley: His Life and His Social Theory,* New York: Dryden Press, 1942, p. 178.

pean antecedents, particularly Weber and Durkheim and sometimes Malinowski. Yet it seems to me that Cooley is often much closer to this tradition than any sociologist of the generations before Parsons and Merton. Cooley never doubted the reality of social facts, yet in regarding society as an independent entity he managed to avoid many of the pitfalls to which such a view ofen leads. In contrast to Durkheim, for instance, Cooley early pointed out the dangers of reifying social facts and he explicitly separated himself from those who believed in a "collective conscience." Nor did Cooley fall prey to the kind of psychological functionalism which Malinowski adopted in his last theoretical writings. At several places in the triology—*Human Nature and the Social Order, Social Organization* and *Social Process*—Cooley asserts the usefulness of the organic view of society, in contending against the fallacy of "particularism." But while advocating this view, he points to all the difficulties involved if one interprets the organic analogy literally. As he matured, and in spite of his personal identification with the artist rather than the scientist, Cooley became more and more committed to the sociological perspective. In *Social Process* one discovers that Cooley, whose first book was about human nature and the individual, now regards the person as a category of sociological analysis. The person, he says, is "the most evident differentiation in the process of human life."[14] With quiet power, he used this approach to analyze questions which in recent years have become key issues occupying the attention of professional sociologists—What is the role of social structure in maintaining religious ideas? How important are bureaucracy, on the one hand, and primary group ideals, on the other, in creating social cohesion? What are the functions for society, and what are the functions for the individual, of famliy organization? Under what conditions is class-consciousness likely to arise in a stratification system ordinarily characterized by open classes? What are the relative merits of inheritance and competition as mechanisms for recruiting men into the occupational hierarchy of a society?

In this list of subjects which still engage us we can perhaps see why Cooley was an anomaly in his own time: it is because he speaks so directly to ours.

[14] *Social Process*, New York: Charles Scribner, 1925, p. 55.

A GENERAL TYPOLOGY OF MIGRATION *

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MOST studies of international migration are focused on the movement from or to one particular country, and virtually all of the other, somewhat broader works are concerned with a single historical era. Moreover, the emphasis is usually on description rather than analysis, so that the theoretical framework into which these limited data are fitted is ordinarily rather primitive. In this paper, an attempt is made to bring together into one typology some of the more significant analyses of both internal and international migration, as a step toward a general theory of migration.

The best known model for the analysis of migration is the typology constructed some years ago by Fairchild.[1] He classifies

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Society, Washington, D. C., August, 1957. It was written as a chapter of a volume on population to be published in 1959.

[1] Henry Pratt Fairchild, *Immigration: A World Movement and Its American Significance*, Rev. edition, New York: Macmillan, 1925, pp. 13 ff. In spite of the fact that it has all the faults of a pioneer effort, this classification has been adopted uncritically in several other works on the subject. See, for example, Maurice R. Davie, *World Immigration with Special Reference to the United States*, New York: Macmillan, 1949, pp. 2–3; Julius Isaac, *Economics of Migration*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1947, p. 1. The most recent and in many respects the best text in the field takes over Fairchild's four types and adds a fifth, *com-*