

Antonio O. Donini and Joseph A. Novack (eds.), *Origins and Growth of Sociological Theory: Readings on the History of Sociology*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982, 199 pp., \$19.95 (cloth), \$9.95 (paper).

This reader contains 13 essays (11 previously published) tracing the development of sociological theory through the "gradual evolution of thought in the Western hemisphere, preceding from theological or religious thinking, through philosophical or analytic reasoning, to positive or empirical science" (1). In keeping with this trisection of the development of social thought, the book is divided into three parts.

Part I—"The Precursors of Sociology"—uses two chapters to review some important developments in social philosophy (most between the 16th and 18th centuries), and has separate chapters on the works of Rousseau and Montesquieu. Three social-philosophical developments were presented as important for the development of theories of society. First, the Arab writer Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), considered "the first social scientist" (4), discerned that what held societies together was the "social glue" of feelings of identification that individuals held with other societal members. By studying sedentary and nomadic tribes, Khaldun theorized that the subjective factors promoting social stability were both cause and effect of variations in social organizations (he also emphasized the role of ecology).

The second development was the variations of the social contract theory of societal organization. The ideas of Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza and Rousseau are outlined. Although contract theories have been rendered problematic as explanations of social organization, they were important in the movement from theological interpretations of society toward the use of reason and logical analysis to explain social organization. This development is viewed as an intermediate stage preceding social scientific understandings.

Another related development was the increasing use of "secondary causes" (geography, climate, etc.) to explain historical situations and changes, rather than "primary causes"

(Divine Providence or Divine Intervention). Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) and Montesquieu were instrumental in supplanting theological versions of history with more earthly interpretations.

Part I ends with chapters detailing the contributions to the evolution of social thought made by Rousseau and Montesquieu. Irving M. Zeitlin wrote both essays, and does a commendable job presenting key elements of each man's thought. Zeitlin's extrapolation of the role that the concepts of "natural man" and "general will" play in Rousseau's version of the social contract is very illuminating. He also points out the significance of Rousseau's investigations into the social origins of inequality. As for Montesquieu, Zeitlin concurs with Emile Durkheim who referred to Montesquieu as a *precursor* of sociological theory and method. Montesquieu's main contribution to theory was his argument that by studying social facts, one could discover the developmental laws (similar to natural laws) which govern societal evolution. In his investigations of social facts, Montesquieu advanced two important sociological methods: (1) comparative studies of various cultures, and (2) the use of ideal-type concepts as analytical devices.

There are two major weaknesses in Part I. First, there are no references in J.H. Abraham's essay on 18th century social philosophers. To summarize a writer's main ideas, and to use quotes several lines in length without referring to the works from which they were extracted probably does more to hinder rather than stimulate the student's inquiry into these philosophers. But of greater concern is the failure of the editors to include a discussion of the influence upon sociological thought of German Idealist philosophy. Admittedly, choosing which materials to include and which to exclude in a book such as this is no easy task, but given the significance of German Idealism for Marx, Weber, and contemporary critical and phenomenological sociology, it would have been worth the space to include a chapter on this important area of philosophy.

Part II—"The Founders of Sociology"—has essays on the works of Saint-Simon, Comte, Spencer, Marx, and Engels. The chapters outlining the thought of Comte and Spencer are clear and concise and do not require elaboration since the significance

of their works has been devalued by most contemporary sociologists.

Saint-Simon has had a dual influence. Depending on how one interprets the concept of "industry," Saint-Simon is regarded as a bourgeois prophet of industrialization or a utopian socialist. In either respect, his contributions to political economy were significant. Another area of influence was his concept of "social physiology" and his attempt to integrate it into the realm of the positive sciences which had obvious influence on the development of what became sociology, especially through Comte (who was a secretary for Saint-Simon for some time and was greatly influenced by his ideas).

The chapter on Marx is the low point of the book. The author, Donald MacRae, writes that Marx's ideas are simply outdated, because we now have "too many workable concepts for social analysis for this system still to be useful or relevant" (116). Given this sort of bias it is not surprising to find that MacRae completely discounts Marx's theories of history, political economy and social organization. Marx's only noteworthy contribution is the concept of alienation used by the early Marx (which the author argues is more important for social psychology than to political economy and the study of stratification). In all, this chapter does absolutely nothing to advance either an understanding of Marx's ideas, or his influence on the development of sociology.

In contrast, the essay on Engels is very informative. Of special importance was his effort to fit the "Marxian" concept of dialectic into the natural evolutionary schema popular in the 19th century. According to Engels, in accord with natural evolutionary laws, societies develop in a dialectical fashion, and for better or worse this concept of societal development has greatly affected the development of Marxist thought.

With the exception of the essay on Marx, Part II provides an illuminating glance into the major ideas of a number of theorists who have had a profound influence on the development of sociological theory.

Part III—"The Builders of Modern Sociology"—traces in three chapters the growth of sociology and social theory from

## Mid-American Review of Sociology

the late 19th century through the mid-1950s. In the first essay the reader is given a brief summary of the works of such pioneer American writers as Sumner, Ward, Cooley and Mead, along with lesser-known figures such as Small, Giddings, Ross, and Ellwood. American sociology in this early period is characterized as being fragmentary, ahistorical, and optimistic (139). It was fragmentary because, with few exceptions, American sociologists eschewed the grand theories of social organization characteristic of European sociology. It was ahistorical due to the relatively brief existence of American society, and because industrialization, immigration, urbanization, and territorial expansion led sociologists to consider future developments and problems at the expense of historical research. Sociology was "imbued with a warm, benevolent, if hazy, kind of idealism" (139), because sociologists were allowed to prescribe remedies for social problems of the day, and researchers felt they could exercise an influence over the development of American society, thereby improving the human condition.

The next chapter is the only primary source material in the text, a reprint of a 1957 article by William F. Ogburn explaining his theory of cultural lag. The essay does two important things. First, it presents a clear explanation of this influential theory. Second, Ogburn (writing 35 years after initial publication of the cultural lag thesis) provides an excellent example of the process of reworking theories to account for new research findings. The process by which the cultural lag theory was modified and reworked gives the reader valuable insight into theory construction.

The final chapter (excluding a summary chapter by the editors) sketches developments in sociology between 1935 and 1954. Research such as Stouffer's "The American Soldier," and Myrdal's "An American Dilemma" reflected a tendency for larger sociological investigations. The emergence of professional journals and regional sociological associations also characterized the field's growth during this era. As for sociological theory, two major theory groups were emerging: neopositivism and social action theories. George Lundberg was the leading proponent of positivist theory, while thinkers such as Parsons,

Znaniecki, MacIver, and Becker were formulating social action schemes. The major ideas of each of these theorists is reviewed in this fine essay, along with those of Robert Merton.

Notwithstanding the problematic areas pointed out, this collection of essays provides the reader with valuable insights into the emergence of social thought and the development of sociology as an independent discipline. The editors have put together a book which is valuable as a class text, a handy reference book, and as a good reader for anyone interested in the historical development of sociological theory.

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