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Why do disciplines fail? *The strange case of British sociology*

IN recent years historians have become increasingly interested in the natural history of the disciplines. Why, they ask, does one set of ideas and practices become articulate, systematic, and professional, while another set does not? There is a general agreement that certain conditions have been essential for the emergence and recognition of particular disciplines. These conditions include, *inter alia*, competent and forceful leadership, a broadening consensus among practitioners about methodology and objectives, efficient organization, regular procedures for training and, of course, adequate funds. But the processes by which disciplines are actually established still remain elusive and unexplained. This essay suggests that an understanding of why some disciplines establish status and influence may be derived from a study of those that do not. A case in point is sociology, a discipline that failed abysmally in Britain at the same time that the other new social sciences there, and sociology elsewhere, succeeded in capturing intellectual and public approval. An analysis of that failure reveals a fatal weakness in content. Charismatic personalities, the energetic activity of a group of believers, and the receptivity of institutions were necessary factors in the establishment of sociology as a profession. But the survival of the profession in the United States, France and Germany depended not so much upon organization as upon the sociologists' ability to illuminate and explain social anomalies left by the late nineteenth-century erosion of traditional beliefs and relations. Sociology became an autonomous discipline, claiming as its field the study of society, only where it provided incisive social criticism. Recently, Stanislaw Andreski has assigned to the sociologist the duty of bringing 'to light what many would like to conceal, destroying cherished illusions and wounding susceptibilities'.¹ And Anthony Giddens, concerned about the 'state of sociology', has warned that only a 'subversive' sociology can transcend a sociological tradition characterized by empty rhetoric or uninspired banality.² The British sociological tradition began with optimistic expectations about the course of social development. Unlike their colleagues in America and on the continent, the British

1. Stanislaw Andreski, *The Uses of Comparative Sociology* (University of California, 1965), p. 45.

2. Anthony Giddens, 'The State of Sociology', *The Times Literary Supplement* (27 Feb. 1981), 215-16.

founders of the new discipline never took a long, hard, corrosive look at their society.

After a promising beginning in 1903, sociology in Britain virtually had disappeared by the outbreak of the Great War. In the long period between the eclipse of Herbert Spencer in the 1890s and the revival of sociology in the 1950s, sociology hardly existed in the British Isles as an intellectual enterprise or even a series of pragmatic prescriptions. In Britain, aside from the London School of Economics where L. T. Hobhouse and his successor Morris Ginsberg taught an evolutionary sociology, there were no academic courses in sociology, no synthetic theorists, no genuinely professional associations, no commanding journal of sociological work or opinion, and no sociologists. Within just four years after its enthusiastic launching in 1903, the field of sociology declined absolutely in Britain both as a theoretical and as an applied study. Until after the Second World War there was no academic or public demand for sociologists. In the long and barren hiatus between 1907 and the 1950s, only schools of social work survived.

During the half century in which sociology withered in Britain, it flourished in America and on the continent. As early as 1909, 337 American universities offered sociology courses and by 1933 their faculties wrote for and read nine scholarly journals.¹ Still more significant for the expansion of a profession without private clients, American sociology successfully marketed its ideas to a responsive mass public.² In France, at the same time, Durkheim, Tarde, and the International Institute of Sociology made sociology a 'French' subject that was exported to an international audience by means of three prestigious journals. Sociological studies were actively promoted in Germany, too, by Weber, Simmel, Tönnies, Barth, Mach, Avenarius, Riehl, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie. Even Italian and Belgian sociologists were energetically creating successful associations and journals.³

Why, in spite of such great expectations at the beginning of the century, did British sociology falter? What prevented the development of a study of society based upon either synthetic or analytic social theory? Until the 1950s, British sociology had no recognized academic standing nor any alternative institutional positions from which to influence effectively either social thought or public policy.

1. Edward A. Purcell, Jr, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and the Problem of Value* (Kentucky, 1973), p. 16; Robert Mark Wenley, 'Sociology as an Academic Subject', *Sociological Papers*, III (1906), 281-4.

2. See Vernon Dibble, 'Discussion of Herman and Julia R. Schwendinger's *The Sociologists of the Chair. A Radical Analysis of the Formative Years of North American Sociology (1883-1922)*', in *History and Theory* xv, 3 (1976), 293-321.

3. Victor Branford, 'On the Origin and Use of the World Sociology; and the Relation of Sociological to Other Studies and to Practical Problems', *Sociological Papers*, I (London, 1904), p. 13; Goran Therborn, *Science, Class and Society. On the Formation of Sociology and Historical Materialism* (London, 1976), p. 117.

The conventional explanation for a failure of sociology in Britain was formulated first by Talcott Parsons in 1937. Parsons contended that the abstract, structural theory that informed continental sociology was too alien to be accommodated to the prevailing traditions of British empirical and individualist philosophy.¹ But Parsons' theory fails because he did not recognize how deeply various forms of Idealism had penetrated British thought. There is, moreover, no evidence in the work of British sociologists of irreconcilable differences between abstract and empirical theory. On the contrary, pure social science promised to provide policy applications, while clearly-articulated, purely theoretical assumptions about the nature of society guided the efforts of even the most apparently empirical data gatherer. Within the past decade, there have been three provocative attempts at further explanation: Perry Anderson's class theory, Philip Abrams' sociology of sociology and, most recently, Stefan Collini's analysis of sociological ideas as part of an Idealist community of discourse.

Perry Anderson argues that on the continent and in America a functionalist sociology provided theoretical support to a middle class eager to justify its own social legitimacy and identity as distinct from that of the aristocracy. But in Britain, the argument continues, since the middle class aspired to assimilation with the aristocracy, a sociology emphasizing sharp class distinction was unwelcome. Because middle-class influence and authority were not threatened from below by revolutionary socialism or Marxism before the First World War, Anderson concludes, the middle class did not need to defend themselves by means of a systematic social theory.² But in Britain, systematic economic, political, and psychological theories were all devised by a middle-class community strongly committed to social reform. Rather than seeking to justify a class position, they challenged the perpetuation of any arbitrary privileges, including their own, by developing social sciences to remedy economic, political, and psychological inequities.³

Unlike Anderson, Philip Abrams believes that it is not class interest but rather the social system that encourages certain roles, such as those of the statistician, administrator, and reform politician, at the expense of others, such as sociologists. Abrams attributes the failure of sociology to an 'economy of resources': people who thought

1. Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action. A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers* (New York, 1968), vol. I, esp. pp. 13, 130-1, 133, 169-71, 173.

2. Perry Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', *The New Left Review* (July-August 1968), 12-13. This view has been endorsed by Alvin Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (New York, 1970), pp. 125-6.

3. See R. N. Soffer, *Ethics and Society in England. The Revolution in the Social Science, 1870-1914* (University of California, 1978), for a discussion of the origin of a reformist economics, psychology, political science, and social psychology.

deeply about social problems were absorbed into direct administrative and intelligence work within government, where those energies were consumed which otherwise might have gone into social theory. In the early twentieth century, he argues, the 'ameliorist and social scientific instincts' tended to be forced apart so that 'what was good for social reform was bad for sociology'.¹ Abrams' fixed-quantity-of-energy theory ignores those remarkably effective people who combined an astonishing quantity of both theoretical and ameliorative work. The theoretical economist Alfred Marshall not only created and managed teaching and research in economics at Cambridge; he sent students to train other economists throughout the English-speaking world, presided over the professional society, edited the major journal, sat diligently on parliamentary commissions dealing with economic reforms, and still found time for sustained philanthropy. Graham Wallas, the founder of theoretical political science in Britain, derived his theory from extensive administrative experience in education and local government. The distinguishing characteristic of the decades from the 1870s until beyond the First World War was the attempt by social reformers of every description, with the sole exception of the sociologists, to use theory and practice to correct and inform each other. Social science and meliorism fed together upon a diet of increasingly indigestible social problems. If some practical reformers, such as W. H. Beveridge, appeared indifferent to social theory, it was certainly not because their involvement in administration left no energy for theoretical thought. Instead, like Beveridge, they felt a more immediate need for the acquisition of practical tools for social reform work.²

Abrams' explanation rests further upon a misreading of the institutional choices available in the new century to bright young men deeply interested in social problems. He feels that when the London School of Economics created a department of Social Science and Administration separate from the already existing department of Sociology, it forced social reform and sociology even further apart. 'Many of the more active recruits to social science . . . when forced to choose between the two competing fields', he argues, chose to enter Social Science and Administration.³ But the only two examples that he gives are Clement Attlee and R. H. Tawney. Abrams has not considered either the origins and purposes of both departments at the LSE or the actual circumstances which led individuals like Attlee and Tawney to their careers. First of all, the two departments never

1. Philip Abrams, *The Origins of British Sociology: 1834-1914* (University of Chicago, 1968), p. 106.

2. Beveridge came to the London School of Economics in 1904 to 'learn something about statistical method from Professor Bowley'. Preface to W. H. Beveridge, *The London School of Economics and its Problems, 1919-1937* (London, 1960), p. 8.

3. Abrams, *The Origins of British Sociology*, p. 111.

competed for the same students or the same faculty, because Social Science and Administration was not meant to be an 'academic' department such as sociology. The new Department was taken over in 1911 from an existing School of Sociology, with Charity Organisation Society origins and personnel, as a training school for enthusiastic but inexperienced social workers who wanted to do good.¹ The two departments were entirely separate, but under E. J. Urwick they shared the same progressive teleology. Urwick came to direct the new Department after a nine-year stint as the first head of the COS School. Although dedicated to the teaching of practical skills, he also believed that progress really came from 'visions and the faith in them, not from any elaborate charts of social causation'. Sociology, he wrote, could not be either a guide to life or a science since individual and collective decisions were not made rationally but depended rather on a 'life-impulse'.² At the COS, where progress had always been taken for granted, the concept of 'sociology' was no longer considered progressive and it disappeared entirely from the Organisation's vocabulary.³ Just before the end of the Great War, LSE's Department of Social Science and Administration was taken over by the Ratan Tata Foundation which assumed its complete financing. By then, the curriculum had become less teleological and much more practical in its courses on the background to the social sciences, social problems and the organization of social services, and methods in case work, administration, and community work.⁴

1. As early as 1897, the need for systematic preparation for the increasing numbers of voluntary and paid social workers had led the COS to appoint a Committee on Training; and in 1903, a School of Sociology was founded under the direction of E. J. Urwick, with a faculty that included prominent members of the COS, and with a tripartite curriculum of social theory and administration, sociology as progressive social evolution, and practical instruction in poor law administration. Although suspicious of a socialist bias at the London School of Economics, the School of Sociology's financial precariousness led them to accept LSE's offer of amalgamation in 1912. Urwick continued as head and the curriculum remained unchanged for the next two years in a Department intended to prepare workers in 'the many forms of social and charitable effort' largely by means of 'first-hand experience' in social work. Confidential report presented by the Special Committee on Social Education to its parent body, the Charity Organisation Society's Council, on 8 June 1903, in Marjorie J. Smith, *Professional Education for Social Work in Britain. An Historical Account* (London, 1952), p. 27. Cf. Charles Loch Mowat, *The Charity Organisation Society, 1869-1913. Its Ideas and Work* (London, 1961), pp. 109-13, 171; Calendar, *London School of Economics*, 1912-13, p. 36.

2. E. J. Urwick, *A Philosophy of Social Progress* (1912) (2nd rev. ed., London, 1920), p. 232; note to 2nd ed., p. vi.

3. See especially Helen Bosanquet's *Social Work in London, 1869-1912. A History of the Charity Organisation Society* (London, 1914), where the word 'sociology' is conspicuously absent.

4. The courses under 'background' were Application of Economic Principles to Social Questions, Social Economics, and Comparative and Social Psychology. Social and organizational problems were covered by Social and Industrial Problems, Social Institutions, Care Committee Worker under the Education Authority, New Forms of Social Effort, and the Condition upon which the maintenance of Health in Factory and Home Depends. 'Methods' were taught by means of Preparatory Class in Case

The careers of Attlee and Tawney do not provide evidence for Abrams' contention that active social scientists were torn between two competing departments. Attlee went to the Department of Social Science and Administration at LSE in 1912 because that was the only job available to him. Desperate for any kind of remunerative work, Attlee was offered a job as lecturer and tutor in the department because of his practical experience at Toynbee Hall, in the Independent Labour Party, and in the campaign for the Poor Law Minority Report. The offer was not, as he recognized, based on his 'academic qualification' but rather on his 'good practical knowledge of social questions'. Most of his actual work turned out to be tutoring students, 'mostly women—who were about to engage in some branch of social work'.¹ In R. H. Tawney's case there was also no conflict between an intellectual and a practical field, but for different reasons. Sociology never had an attraction for him because he disapproved adamantly of any aspiration of social studies towards science. Men of science, Tawney confided to his *Commonplace Book* in November 1914, 'are like children gathering pebbles on the beach, and they usually throw them at one another'.² In particular, he found 'sociology' of 'very little value so far as the improvement of human life is concerned, not because the problems with which it deals are unimportant, but because information—of a more or less speculative character—about the probable consequences and tendencies of human arrangements is, by itself, not very likely to make those arrangements better'. What Tawney found essential was not an increase in social facts, which he conceded was necessary, but rather a moral 'disposition to act on the knowledge which we possess'.³ Social reformers already knew enough about which reforms were needed, he argued, simply on the basis of Christian morality. To him a proper sociology was not science, but rather a moral art which began in recognition of right and wrong and concluded in the achievement of economic justice for

Work and Methods in Charitable Administration, Special Tutorial Class, Introductory Course on Practical Work and Observation, the Social and Industrial Character of London, A History and Critical Account of Some Principles of Social Management, and Elementary Statistical Methods. Calendar, *London School of Economics*, 1917–18.

1. Clement Attlee, *As It Happened* (New York, 1954), p. 44. When Attlee wrote his *The Social Worker* (London, 1920), for the Ratan Tata Department of Social Science at the University of London, he recognized a need for theoretical training in social and economic history, economics, local government, social philosophy, and social psychology (pp. 144–53). It is significant that 'sociology' does not appear on his list and that the emphasis of the book is clearly upon practical work.

2. R. H. Tawney, *Commonplace Book*, ed. and with Intro. by J. M. Winter and D. M. Joslin, *Economic History Review Supplement* v (Cambridge University Press, 1972), 79. Cf. Tawney's diary entry for 11 December 1913, where he wrote that Marshall was wrong to think that economics would ever be a science, quoted in Ross Terrill, *R. H. Tawney and His Times. Socialism as Fellowship* (Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 36, n.

3. Tawney, *Commonplace Book* (16 September 1911), 30.

everyone. To demonstrate the historical roots of such injustice, Tawney became a prolific and polemical economic historian. After a brief and disappointing assistantship in economics at Glasgow, he became deeply involved from 1908 to 1915 in the teaching of working people. His subsequent LSE appointment was largely an extension of his Workers' Education Association activity.

Abrams has not demonstrated that careers in the early twentieth century prove that a contest between thought and action was decided when effective social institutions provided an active outlet for people who might otherwise have devoted themselves to thinking. Nor has he proved that beyond 'all questions of the history of ideas' there was the 'weight which the general institutional environment bore down on the infant science of society'.¹ Unlike Abrams, who insists that the critical difficulty for sociology was not 'an intellectual one, a problem of theory or method',² Stefan Collini argues that a sociological history of sociology must not forget that 'ideas, beliefs, values, or language' are social facts, too.³ In an examination of the rhetoric, thought, and morality of the Idealists F. H. Bradley, Bernard Bosanquet and G. D. R. Ritchie, Collini concludes that these thinkers could have produced sociological analysis comparable to the continental theorists but for their deep-seated hostility to contemporary British identifications of 'sociology' with biological social theory.⁴ Collini's study of L. T. Hobhouse and political argument in England adopts Quentin Skinner's conception of intellectual history as the recovery of intentions, the reconstruction of conventions, and the restoration of contexts.⁵ For Collini, British sociology was doomed specifically because of L. T. Hobhouse's quasi-Idealist use of

1. Abrams, *The Origins of British Sociology*, pp. 148–9.

2. *Ibid.* p. 6.

3. Stefan Collini, 'Sociology and Idealism in Britain, 1880–1920', *European Journal of Sociology*, xix (1978), 49.

4. *Ibid.* 19. Idealists such as J. S. Mackenzie, H. J. W. Hetherington, and J. H. Muirhead denied the value of contemporary sociology because of its naturalistic emphasis. See Mackenzie, *Lectures on Humanism with Special Reference to its Bearing on Sociology* (London, 1907), p. 9, which argues that true sociology would be teleological and not 'a branch of biology'; and Hetherington and Muirhead's *Social Purpose. A Contribution to a Philosophy of Civic Society* (London, 1918), pp. 19, 47, which substitutes an account of the social and individual origins of 'social solidarity' for a biological or psychological interpretation of society.

5. Stefan Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology. L. T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England, 1880–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 7. Quentin Skinner's discussions of the methodology of intellectual history are unfailingly engaging and provocative. See especially his 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, viii (1969), 3–53; "'Social Meaning" and the Explanation of Social Action', in *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, series iv, ed. Peter Laslett, W. G. Runciman, and Quentin Skinner (Oxford, 1972), pp. 136–57; 'Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action', *Political Theory*, ii (1974), 277–303; and Skinner's application of his theories, with results that are surprisingly conventional, in *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1978). For a thoughtful criticism of Skinner, see Gordon J. Schochet, 'Quentin Skinner's Method', *Political Theory*, ii (1974), 261–75.

sociology as a theodicy.¹ Collini concentrates almost exclusively on texts in order to identify the political, moral, and philosophical roots of Hobhouse's sociology. Hobhouse responded to the controversies of the 1880s about Herbert Spencer, Collini argues, by adapting that contemporary form of Oxford Idealism which emphasized moral and social reform. Collini is interested in the genesis and content of Hobhouse's sociology. But a recovery of that level of philosophical and political discourse in which Hobhouse's sociology belongs does not explain the demise of the field in Britain.

Collini's analysis of ideas and Abrams' reading of social systems as the determinants of social roles contribute two important, complementary perspectives to the rise and fall of British sociology. But both views, even when taken together, are not set sufficiently within a historical context. A more complete account must include an analysis of the ways in which institutions and ideas affected each other and of the proportional parts each played in the failure of sociology as a discipline. While organized institutions do not necessarily create disciplines, they can produce a 'resonant and echoing intellectual environment' that transmutes a fragmented subject into a tradition through continuing discussion, influential publications, and a significant number of students.² Wherever sociological ideas were vested in universities, as in America, France, or Germany, they had ready access to a broad audience. Without such a reliable base of continuing institutional support, no discipline can directly influence the intellectual community, the general public, or policy. But no matter how efficiently organized, a discipline's success depends ultimately on the potency and vitality of those ideas on which a claim to special knowledge is based. In Britain, sociologists had neither institutional protection nor, more seriously, viable ideas. From its inception, British sociology moved quickly towards an intellectual cul-de-sac. No matter what their view of the priorities which their subject should serve, those interested in a 'scientific' sociology held tenaciously to a myopic, naively optimistic belief in evolutionary social progress. Until the two decades after the Second World War, when sociologists finally abandoned the idea of progress, they were unable to persuade any potential clientele—whether in the universities, government, or industry—that they possessed an expert understanding of social phenomena around which a recognized profession should flourish.

The development of sociology did not require consensus about the form of the enterprise, or agreement about a particular agenda of subjects, or even an accepted methodological strategy. Indeed,

1. L. T. Hobhouse, 'Scope and Aim of the Sociological Society', *Sociological Papers* i (London, 1904), 31, and Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, pp. 199, 219.

2. Edward Shils, 'Tradition, Ecology, and Institution in the History of Sociology', in Gerald J. Holton (ed), *The Twentieth-Century Sciences: Studies in the Biography of Ideas* (New York, 1972), p. 762.

disputes about all these issues fostered development on the continent and in the United States. Especially in France, Germany, and America, sociologists created critical social theory and self-perpetuating organizations in which theory could be explored and possibly applied. Professional students of society, seeking recognition from their colleagues and public support, replaced amateur sociologists reflecting upon social life from their studies. Herbert Spencer had constructed his sociology for over forty years in increasing solitude. As a result of Spencer's intellectual isolation, he unwittingly taught more about the limits of comprehensive explanatory systems than about social structures and functions. In the early twentieth century, Spencer's system stood as a cautionary testimonial to the hazards of amateur sociology. Even those intellectuals with sociological interests who had a regular, comfortable income that permitted an armchair career, such as Max Weber, chose rather to be involved in professional activities. Weber, forced by illness to withdraw from his professorship at Heidelberg in 1897, resumed close ties with colleagues as co-editor of the important *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* in 1904. Weber was fascinated by the sociology of organizations. He knew that sustained attention to social concepts, the collection and interpretation of social data, and experiments in social practice required the support of stable professional organizations. As editor of the *Archiv*, he devoted the journal to scientific investigation of the 'general cultural significance of the social-economic structure of the human community and its historical forms of organization'.¹ Those Europeans or Americans who thought of themselves as 'sociologists' pursuing a systematic science of society tried to establish professional connections within universities, research institutes, or government. In France, Emile Durkheim set the pattern for the 'progress' of French sociology through 'collective labour' in which increasing specialization would replace the nineteenth-century emphasis upon generalization.² The remarkable status of French sociology at home and abroad in the first three decades of the twentieth century was due largely to the division of theoretical labour and the professional organization of sociological teaching and publication by Durkheim and his followers.³ In

1. Max Weber, "'Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy' (1904), reprinted in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. and ed. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (Glencoe, 1949), p. 67. Werner Sombart and Edgar Jaffé were Weber's co-editors. After his collapse in 1897, Weber was supported by the University of Heidelberg and the Ministry of Education until 1907, when he received a private inheritance. He returned to university teaching after the war and died, at the University of Munich, in 1920. See Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber. An Intellectual Portrait* (New York, 1962), pp. 1-5.

2. Emile Durkheim, Prefaces to *L'Année Sociologique* i (1898) and ii (1899), trans. Kurt H. Wolff in *Emile Durkheim, 1858-1917. A Collection of Essays with Translations and a Bibliography* (Ohio State University, 1960), pp. 347, 348.

3. See Terry N. Clark, 'Emile Durkheim and the Institutionalization of Sociology

America, sociologists had the greatest opportunities. Even a sociological heretic like Thorsten Veblen found a place in the rapidly expanding American university system. Continental sociologists rarely found institutional employment as sociologists. But whether in government agencies or in university departments of education, philosophy, political science or economics, they were able to practise sociology as an autonomous subject by means of social inquiries, writing, and teaching. In 1887, Durkheim taught the first French university course in sociology in the Faculty of Arts at Bordeaux. But his subsequent chair at the Sorbonne in 1906 in 'The Science of Education', did not become 'The Science of Education and Sociology' until 1913. Still, from its beginning in 1887, Durkheim's sociology became the dominant form of social study in France. His students staffed the crucial state, university, and research positions where they were able to influence university appointments, curriculum, and publishing until the 1930s.¹ At the Collège de France, across the street from the Sorbonne, Gabriel Tarde, Durkheim's rival, taught his version of sociology from a chair in 'Modern Philosophy' from 1901 until his death in 1904. In Germany, Ferdinand Tönnies, the author of *Community and Society* (1887) and the founder of the German Society for Sociology, set the themes for modern German sociology from 1890 to 1933. But Tönnies taught economics and political science for most of his life at Kiel. When he was sixty-five in 1920, he finally received an appointment in sociology.² In Britain alone, with the exception of an anomalous position at the LSE after 1907, sociologists were unwelcome in public or private agencies and they were excluded from the universities.

The role of institutions as nurseries for professional disciplines in the twentieth century is especially evident in the development of a cohesive school of sociology at the University of Chicago from the turn of the century. Here, Albion Small, an awesomely successful academic entrepreneur, turned out thousands of students in a department he founded and ruled for three decades. After creating the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1895, he dominated this major organ of sociological opinion as its editor for more than a generation. And, to complete his definition of the profession, Small also presided over the principal American arena for sociological discussion, the American Sociological Society, from its foundation in 1905. The Chicago department was extraordinarily prolific and produced the greatest

in the French University System', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* ix (1968), 57, 68–69; and 'The Structure and Functions of a Research Institute: *The Année Sociologique*', *ibid.* 76–89.

1. Terry N. Clark, *Prophets and Patrons: The French University and the Emergence of the Social Sciences* (Harvard University, 1973), pp. 207–12.

2. Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Harvard University, 1969), pp. 164–8.

number of students of sociology anywhere in the world, the most widely-subscribed journal, and even the most influential textbook, Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess' *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (1921). The Chicago School's insistence upon direct observation as the foundation of sociological generalization was authoritative not so much because of the unchallenged merits of empiricism, but rather because so many sociologists in positions of authority came from Chicago.

There is little dispute as to the quality of Small's magisterial leadership and formidable personality. But it seems clear that he could never have established a new field of study without a public that was responsive to the contents of his sociology. From its beginning in the 1870s, American sociology was passionately committed to solving problems of social dysfunction resulting from population growth, immigrant ethnic groups, over-rapid urbanization, and race conflict. In 1906, William Graham Sumner, the influential Yale sociologist, predicted that a crowded agenda lay ahead for sociologists. If he were a man of forty, just beginning as a professor in an American college, he would feel compelled to shape a department of sociology in response to those social questions shaking 'American society to its foundations': race, conflicts about capital and welfare, and the effects of divorce.¹ Six years later, Small described sociology as the 'chief organ of social self-examination'. In no period of history 'has it been possible for social scientists to perform more fundamentally constructive public service'. Small concluded his presidential address to the American Sociological Association by urging his colleagues to 'concentrate our forces upon radical problems'.² As late as 1926, John Lewis Gillin, a former president of the ASS, found in his review of the extensive development of sociology in the US that the 'glory' of sociology lay in the 'satisfaction of understanding human relationships and of helping thus to build a better world society'.³ Sumner, Small, and Gillin, although differing in many other ways, well represented the American sociological community in their anger at social injustice and in their definition of sociology as a science of constructive social criticism and remedy.

It was not until 1930, under the presidency of William Ogburn, that the ASS was urged to disavow any commitment to social intervention. Ogburn was the first American sociologist to insist that private ethical and political feelings must be eliminated from

1. William Graham Sumner, 'Discussion of Sociology as a College Subject', *Papers and Proceedings. First Annual Meeting, American Sociological Society, 1906*, i (University of Chicago, 1907), 20.

2. Albion Small, 'The Present Outlook of Social Science', *Papers and Proceedings. Seventh Annual Meeting, American Sociological Society, 1912*, vii, 37.

3. John Lewis Gillin, 'The Development of Sociology in the United States', *Papers and Proceedings. Twenty-first Annual Meeting, American Sociological Society, 1926*, xxi, 25.

professional sociology. As a science, sociology was 'not interested in making the world a better place in which to live, in encouraging beliefs, in spreading information, in dispensing news, in setting forth impressions of life, in leading the multitudes, or in guiding the ship of state'. Science was directly interested only in 'discovering new knowledge'. Welcoming the decline of the social theorist and social philosopher, and the rise of the statistician, Ogburn tabooed ethics and values, except in the choice of problems. In the future, he predicted, sociologists would do 'hard, dull, tedious, and routine tasks' that would be worth the trouble because they would 'yield pure gold'.¹

Despite Ogburn's clarion call to professional objectivity, many of those attracted to American sociology continued to be militantly liberal or politically well left of centre. Morris Janowitz has suggested that two traditions of sociological knowledge have emerged within the American profession. The 'enlightenment' sociologist collects, interprets, and presents empirical data objectively so that policy makers and the public will be sufficiently informed to debate social issues before acting. An 'engineering' sociologist thinks of himself as a highly-trained theoretical specialist, supported by methodologists, who intervenes directly in social affairs. If the 'enlightened' have prevailed historically, as Janowitz contends, it is because sociology has remained a university discipline organized around departments and without direct influence upon policy decisions.² But even though American sociologists have been restricted to universities, they have contributed such concepts as 'social indicators' and 'cultural lag' to social discourse as a result of popular writing and of their participation in much-publicized investigative bodies. First, the Chicago Commission on Race Relations in 1919 and then the Hoover Research Committee on Recent Trends in the early 1930s brought sociologists to the public's attention as academics expert in social analysis. Perhaps the single most important factor in the institutionalization of American sociology was the enormous and continuous growth of American universities in the first half of the twentieth century. New university presidents, with autocratic powers, created sociology departments all over the country by persuading willing boards of trustees and local financiers to invest in them. Wealthy backers were willing to support sociology because the new faculties trained large numbers of students who wanted to translate radical social theory into pragmatic programmes, public welfare, social work and philanthropy. The new American uni-

1. William F. Ogburn, 'The Folkways of a Scientific Sociology', *Studies in Quantitative and Cultural Sociology* (American Sociological Society, 1930), 2-11.

2. Morris Janowitz, 'The Professionalization of Sociology', *Varieties of Political Expression in Sociology* (University of Chicago, 1972), esp. pp. 107-11; and *Political Conflict* (University of Chicago, 1970).

versities, funded by generous donors, moved rapidly towards a future that they hoped would be brilliant enough to compensate for their lack of a past. In universities so eager to gain reputations, promising new fields such as sociology found few vested interests to overcome.¹

In Britain there were neither friendly financiers nor aspiring universities to welcome sociologists. At Oxford, proponents of a classical curriculum prevailed until the 1920s. Cambridge, although less traditional, was equally inhospitable. There, Alfred Marshall, founder of the new economics, dismissed sociology as too grandiose an attempt to comprehend and explain experience, let alone to prescribe sufficiently precise social remedies.² When a 'new' sociology finally began in England in 1903, a decade later than in America, France, Germany, and Italy, it had to compete for institutional places with such newly-established fields as economics, comparative psychology and political science. In that rivalry, the sociologists lost, even within the newer universities. In America and in Germany, decentralized universities, in fierce intellectual competition with each other, encouraged innovations and specialization that promised academic distinction. French sociologists, within a centralized university system resistant to change, taught sociology from a variety of older departments. In Britain, there was no teaching of sociology within other departments, no university appointments (except for LSE), and no academic competition. Political science, in contrast to sociology, was taught not only at LSE from its inception, but at Cambridge as part of the Historical Tripos. Cambridge students reading history at the end of the nineteenth century had to answer a paper with questions 'bearing on the inductive study of political institutions'.³ And, in 1925, when the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial offered Cambridge one chair in Political Science and another in Sociology, the University accepted endowment only in Political Science; and Ernest Barker, a political theorist, became the first professor. A chair in Sociology was not established at Cambridge until the late 1960s. A Cambridge School of Economics was created by Alfred Marshall in 1903 out of a desultory school of

1. Wenley, 'Sociology as an Academic Subject', 286-9; Dibble, 'Discussion of *Sociologists of the Chair*', 311; Mary O. Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science, 1865-1905* (Kentucky, 1975), pp. 295-8; H. E. Barnes, 'Albion Woodbury Small: Promoter of American Sociology and Expositor of Social Interest', *An Introduction to the History of Sociology* (Chicago, 1948), pp. 788-90; and A. W. Small, 'The American Sociological Society', *American Journal of Sociology*, xii (March 1907), 579-580.

2. When the Sociological Society was founded in 1903, Marshall would not join, despite sociology's 'magnificent aspiration': Marshall to Lujo Brentano, 18 Aug. 1903, in H. W. McCready, 'Alfred Marshall and Tariff Reform, 1903: Some Unpublished Letters', *Journal of Political Economy*, lxxiii (1955), 266.

3. 'Report of the Special Board for History and Archaeology, June 6, 1885', in *Notes on the Development of the History Tripos, 1875-1932*, Seeley Library, University of Cambridge.

moral and political economy, on the strength of his economic theory. He attracted brilliant students, trained them, and then sent them to teach Marshallian economics in other universities or to practise that teaching in government offices. Had there been a comparable, theoretically innovative figure in sociology in any faculty at Oxford or Cambridge, a comparable School of Sociology might have been launched; if a sociologist at a lesser university had been sufficiently impressive, that sociologist's students might have received appointments at Oxford or Cambridge and a school might have been created.¹

The most likely home for sociology in Britain was the London School of Economics. And, indeed, the only chair in sociology anywhere in the British Isles until after the Second World War was created at LSE in 1906. That chair was shared by L. T. Hobhouse and Edward Westermarck. But even at LSE, undergraduates were not permitted to read sociology for a degree and there was no provision for sociological research by either faculty or students. Attached to the faculty of economics and political science, sociology was one of twelve alternatives for Honours in the Bachelor's degree given by that faculty. At LSE, few students actually studied sociology and, without a preparatory undergraduate syllabus, there could hardly be postgraduate students or any continuity in the methodological and interpretative traditions necessary to the maintenance of a discipline.²

As late as 1933, there were only thirty students taking sociology as their main subject at LSE.³ In 1935, T. H. Marshall published the results of an inquiry into the teaching of social science at every British university. Only London University offered a BA degree and an Honours course in sociology; most of the students were trained in the Department of Social Studies at Bedford College. Until 1935, Bedford's staff did not include an 'official' sociologist. A BSc (Econ) degree, which included Economics, Economic History, Banking, Commerce, Statistics, Geography, Sociology, International Relations and Law, was also available, but it was essentially a degree in Economics. At Liverpool, a similar degree was offered in Social Science. Within other universities, the only aspect of sociology that received even weak academic support was the training of social workers, begun in Liverpool in 1905 and at LSE seven years later. Certificates and diplomas in preparation for social work were available by the 1930s at Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Nottingham at standards 'usually lower' than those for a

1. For a discussion of the sociology of academic institutions, see Joseph Ben-David and Avraham Zloczower, 'Universities and Academic Systems in Modern Societies', *European Journal of Sociology*, iii (1962), 67-82. Cf. Charles F. McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914* (Cambridge University, 1980), p. 3.

2. Arthur Smithells, reply to Wenley's 'Sociology as an Academic Subject', *Sociological Papers*, iii (1906), 300.

3. Ernest B. Harper, 'Sociology in England', *Social Forces*, xi (Mar. 1933), 340.

degree. Sociology could have been part of a 'mixed degree' such as the Modern Greats, consisting of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, at Oxford. But Marshall saw correctly that the Oxford Faculty of Social Studies, whose Board controlled Modern Greats, was 'little more than an academic expression'. An undergraduate was exposed to other social subjects only if his tutor was interested in that subject. At Birmingham, an Honours School of Social and Political Science taught Economics, History, Philosophy, and Law, but not Sociology. And at Liverpool, the empirical sociologist Alexander Carr-Saunders was able to encourage some interdisciplinary research because the School of Social Science and Administration included Economics, Commerce, Geography, Social Science, and Public Administration. In Wales and in Scotland, sociology fared no better than in England.¹

The presence of two complementary departments at LSE before the First World War, one concerned with theory, method, and explanation, the other with practical training, could have been a stimulus to the development of sociology. Economics at Cambridge and political science at LSE required both theoretical and empirical work for the degree. For a similar programme to have succeeded in sociology, the theoretical part would have had to provide methods and explanations which would have made the applied work more precise, more informed, and most important, more effective in accomplishing particular social ends. Practical social workers in Britain ignored sociological theory because the unimaginative and threadbare contents of that theory were of no use to them.

Sociology failed to become an academic subject not because of the intransigent conservatism of British universities, but rather because there was no uniquely 'sociological' theory able to explain social events. Economists brought a specialized, technical theory to the study of the market and of wealth; political scientists developed theories for comparing political forms and policies; psychological theory revealed hidden forces and conflicts which moved individuals, while social psychologists analyzed crowd behaviour; and anthropologists devised cultural models to penetrate the mysteries of primitive peoples. Sociologists could not compete for academic places or for the support of social reformers because all that they offered was a view of society which uncritically endorsed existing social tendencies. While some sociologists, such as Hobhouse and Geddes, criticized the absence of economic and cultural opportunities for ordinary people, all the factions, including Hobhouse and Geddes, continued the nineteenth-century sociologists' faith in the inevitability of progressive reform.

1. T. H. Marshall, 'Report on the Teaching of the Social Sciences in British Universities', in *The Social Sciences: Their Relations in Theory and in Teaching*. The Report of a conference held under the joint auspices of the Institute of Sociology and the International Student Service (British Committee) at King's College, London in 1935 (London, 1936), pp. 30-40.

American and continental sociologists, on the other hand, were much more radical in their exposure of the discrepancies between social ideals and the less than ideal realities. In America, where sociologists were most radical, they often criticized each other for not moving with greater dispatch from radical theory to social remedy. E. A. Ross was impatient with Small for not allowing his social criticism greater rein. After a visit to Chicago in 1905, Ross complained to Ward that the Chicago sociologists were becoming timid, 'always pottering with "scope and method" instead of giving forth something positive on social problems'.¹ From the 1890s to the 1930s, German sociologists, including Tönnies, Georg Simmel, and Weber, explored the destructive effects of capitalism upon political and cultural life. Essentially 'enlightened conservatives', they studied the sources of social cohesion and disintegration in order to identify the economic, psychological, and social forces that either bound or separated people.² Among the many problems given to his colleagues, Tönnies emphasized understanding of the various forms of social conflict and accommodation.³ Durkheim, too, saw sociology as a scientific response to social crisis. In 1915, explaining the importance of French sociology, he wrote that among 'a people who consider their institutions everything they ought to be, nothing can incite thought to apply itself to social matters'.⁴ Durkheim was interested in sociology as a scientific study of conflict and social pathology because he wanted to discover how best to replace decayed social traditions with new ones. His studies of suicide and anomie still remain useful because of their systematic revelation of the dilemmas produced by modern social relations. But in Britain, an optimistic expectation that individuals were indeed moving towards greater social goods led sociologists to succumb to a seductive biological model that promised approaching social harmony.

When British sociologists entered the new century, they jettisoned Herbert Spencer's discredited system, but retained his commitment to the systematic discovery of basic social laws. Inevitably, they found themselves no more able than Spencer to create an explanatory science of society, and their credibility suffered with the educated public. While it is true that all the social sciences in the early twentieth century, including sociology, borrowed such biological concepts as process, individuation, comparison, and correlation to support their

1. Bernard J. Stern (ed.), 'Ward-Ross Correspondence', *American Sociological Review*, xiii (Feb. 1948), 93.

2. Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, pp. 173, 132.

3. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society* (Michigan State Univ., 1957), trans. & ed. by Charles P. Loomis; cf. Julian Freund, 'German Sociology in the Time of Max Weber', in *A History of Sociological Analysis*, eds. Tom Bottomore and Robert Nisbet (New York, 1978), p. 152.

4. Durkheim, 'Sociology', trans. Jerome D. Folkman, in *Emile Durkheim, 1858-1917*, p. 376.

epistemologies, it was only in sociology that the biological organism became a model for explaining social structure and function. Nineteenth-century sociologists such as Comte and Spencer, though differing in their analyses, had agreed that social evolution testified to the individual's rational progress towards increasing social harmony. While Comte described what he believed to be the historical stages in man's adaptation to progressively changing social conditions, Spencer interpreted individual behaviour as increasingly altruistic, as a change of character produced by the process of social evolution. By the end of the century, both systems became obsolete because neither was able to explain the undeniable growth of social conflict. When a new generation of sociologists turned to a new generation of biologists for more accurate explanations of social evolution, they found instead embattled factions bitterly debating the effect of biological forces upon behaviour and institutions. Controversy raged, especially over the relative influence of nature and nurture upon an individual's mental and physical characteristics.¹ Considering the biologists' diverse and hotly-contested interpretations of human nature and conduct, sociologists should not have expected to command confidence by resting their theories upon biological foundations. But they did. British sociologists depended upon biological metaphors about gradual, increasingly complex processes of growth to bolster their *a priori* assumptions about a social community characterized increasingly by rational, moral and altruistic behaviour. All the different camps claimed that their contentions were supported by irrefutable biological evidence. And just as Herbert Spencer had failed to convince most people of the reliability of sociological laws derived from biological processes, the new sociologists failed in their turn.

American sociology had also begun with biological foundations. But between 1890 and 1920, most American sociologists rejected

1. See especially, *Reports to the Evolution Committee of the Royal Society*. Report I. *Experiments Undertaken by William Bateson, F.R.S., and E. R. Saunders* (London, 1901); Bateson's Preface to *Mendel's Principles of Heredity. A Defence* (Cambridge, 1902) and his *Variation and Differentiation* (printed for the author, 1903). This pamphlet was a reply to Karl Pearson's 'On the Fundamental Conceptions of Biology', *Biometrika*, 1 (1902). Pearson, a first-rate mathematician and Galton's most distinguished disciple, headed the Biometric Institute at the University of London. Bateson was Professor of Biology at Cambridge from 1908 to 1910, when he resigned to direct the newly founded John Innes Horticultural Institute at Merton. See also, Bateson, 'Presidential Address to the Zoological Section, British Association', Cambridge Meeting, 1904, in Beatrice Bateson, *William Bateson, F.R.S. Naturalist* (Cambridge, England, 1928). As referee of the Royal Philosophical Transactions, Bateson rejected Pearson's paper on the measurement of inherited qualities, and his address as president of the Zoological Section was directed largely against a biology purporting to support eugenics. Also see August Weismann, 'On Heredity', Inaugural lecture as Pro-Rector at the University of Freiburg in 1883, on the transmission of acquired characteristics through the 'substance of germ-cells', in *Essays upon Heredity and Kindred Biological Problems*, authorized translation, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1891), pp. 69-106.

metaphors drawn from biology. In Jamesian psychology, with its emphasis upon the efficacy of free will, reform sociologists found greater encouragement than in the random forces implied by biological descriptions of development. But an even more important cause of the abandonment of evolutionary theory may have been that professionalization forced academic sociologists to distinguish their discipline from the assumptions and analogies of other disciplines. After 1900, when sociology was accepted as an academic subject in nearly one hundred American colleges and universities, sociologists could only maintain their independent status by differentiating their subject from apparently similar disciplines such as economics or history. Hamilton Cravens has argued compellingly that seventeen major sociologists, produced by institutional professionalization at the turn of the century, set out deliberately to give sociology its own professional, intellectual content by jettisoning evolutionary and naturalistic models. These enormously influential men—all but one was elected to the presidency of the American Sociological Association before 1920—produced a generation of students, such as Robert Park and Luther Lee Bernard, who based sociology upon cultural determinism, specific empirical research, and clearly recognized areas of specialization.¹ E. A. Ross, perhaps most representative of the American sociologist's determination to delineate an autonomous field, wrote in his *Foundations of Sociology* (1905) that 'no recognized science borrows its laws from other departments of knowledge. The lasting possession of sociology will be regularities which, instead of being imported from without, have been discovered by patiently comparing social facts among themselves.'²

In England, sociology was unable to achieve the status of 'a recognized science' until the 1950s, largely because the new field was founded upon naturalistic models borrowed from biology. One month before Spencer's death, in October 1903, a Sociological Society was founded to bring together every kind of student of social phenomena. Unfortunately for the future of their enterprise, they all agreed that the proper study of sociology ought to be 'social evolution'.³ The new Society was welcomed with enthusiasm by the press and by various groups that led British intellectual and political life.⁴ Dedicating itself to 'scientific, educational, and practical aims',

1. Hamilton Cravens, 'The Abandonment of Evolutionary Social Theory in America: The Impact of Academic Professionalization upon American Sociological Theory, 1890-1920', *American Studies* xii: 2 (1971), esp. 6-16. Craven's seventeen sociologists are: Frank W. Blackmar, Charles H. Cooley, James Q. Dealey, Charles Ellwood, Franklin H. Giddings, John M. Gilette, Edward Cary Hayes, George E. Howard, Albert Galloway Keller, James P. Litchenberger, Edward A. Ross, Albion O. Small, William Graham Sumner, William I. Thomas, George E. Vincent, and Ulysses G. Weatherly.

2. E. A. Ross, *Foundations of Sociology* (New York, 1905), p. 54.

3. 'Scope and Aims of the Sociological Society', *Sociological Papers*, i, 31.

4. *The Speaker*, 15 Apr. 1904, and *The Daily Chronicle* and the *Westminster Gazette*,

the Society attracted a heterogeneous membership of active people representing a great variety of intellectual interests.¹ In the first years of its existence the Society met frequently before enthusiastic audiences. Their proceedings, together with the national and international controversy they provoked, were published in three weighty annual volumes of papers.²

Simultaneously, some teaching of sociology at LSE was begun by three very different men. One was the Finnish moral philosopher Edward Westermarck, who used comparative methods to provide evidence supporting the familiar nineteenth-century belief in inevitable individual ethical progress. Another was the positivist ethnologist, A. C. Haddon, who anticipated and shaped the emergence of the British School of Social Anthropology at Cambridge.³ In the 1920s, English social anthropologists were recognized internationally as an 'exceptionally tightly-knit professional group' with a 'revolutionary methodology, shared standards of training and evaluation, and a fairly coherent theoretical framework'.⁴ Beginning in the late nineteenth century with evolutionary explanations for cultural change, anthropologists had moved through migrational and diffusionist theories to a functional social anthropology launched by B. C. Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. The establishment of social anthropology within the universities was not due to fortuitous circumstances or to struggles among academic interest groups. Rather, social anthropology prospered by drawing precise limits for its subject. Sociology, born in the nineteenth century as a synthetic response to the fragmentation of newly-industrialized societies, attempted to explain the relationships of increasingly complex social

19 Apr. 1904, represent the characteristic enthusiasm of the press. But not every group approved. A Royal Society committee set up in 1902 to consider whether the social sciences ought to be included within the Society rejected them because their 'utility' was 'in dispute'; *Year-Book of the Royal Society* (London, 1902), p. 182.

1. Reverse side of the Sociological Society's form of application for membership, originally stated in the *Report* issued by the Society's founding committee at the first meeting on 3 November 1903. See James Bryce (the first president of the Society), 'The Use and Purpose of a Sociological Society', Introductory Address, 18 Apr. 1904, *Sociological Papers*, i, xiv-xviii.

2. Although the *Sociological Papers* (1904-6) were edited by a board composed of L. T. Hobhouse as chairman, Patrick Geddes, G. P. Gooch, J. A. Hobson, Benjamin Kidd, J. M. Robertson, and Victor Branford as Secretary, Branford had 'unconditional' editorial control: Branford, 'The Sociological Work of Leonard Hobhouse', *Sociological Review*, xxi (Oct. 1929), 276. The papers read in the first year of meetings and then published in 1905 were organized under three categories: history and methodology; pioneer researches in borderland problems; and applied sociology. During the second year, the categories were: history, ethics, psychology, biology, and geography; in the third year the subjects were even more diverse.

3. Edward Westermarck's major work was *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, 2 vols. (London 1906-8); A. C. Haddon had just published the results of his famous Torres Straits expeditions in *Report of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits* (Cambridge University, 1903).

4. See Adam Kuper, *Anthropologists and Anthropology. The British School, 1922-1972* (London, 1973), p. 9.

groups and institutions. But as an inseparable part of the society he studied, the sociologist was enmeshed within prevailing social perceptions. Social anthropologists also attempted to study societies in their totality, but in contrast to sociologists, they studied societies which were pre-industrial, approaching them as outsiders with superior knowledge rather than as troubled participants. Social anthropologists succeeded in establishing an autonomous study of small-scale, relatively simple, alien and exotic societies whose structures and forms could be grasped, described, and analyzed by a scientific observer.

At Cambridge, Oxford, and the University of London, anthropology was accepted as a legitimate discipline by the beginning of the twentieth century. As early as 1892, the Medical School at Cambridge sponsored regular anthropological lectures: Haddon held a part-time lectureship there in physical anthropology from 1895 until 1898, when he led the famous Torres Straits expeditions which he planned and towards which the University contributed funds. In 1900, he was appointed university lecturer in ethnology, a post converted to a readership in 1909. By then, a Board of Anthropological Studies, created in 1904, had already begun to produce those students whose work defined the scope and purposes of the profession.¹ After the First World War, Haddon combined theory and practice by making the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology a primary centre for anthropological study and research. The readers and lecturers in ethnology, social anthropology, and physical anthropology, the additional teaching and the Museum work were coordinated in 1920 in a new Board of Archaeological and Anthropological Studies. In 1932, when the Cambridge School had demonstrated its ascendancy over the discipline, the William Wyse Chair was established. At Oxford, there was a Diploma in Anthropology by 1905, and a course was launched in Archaeology and Anthropology in 1919. Although no chair existed in Anthropology until 1937, Oxford students could read in a field which provided readers in ethnology and in social anthropology, lecturers in physical anthropology, and courses in comparative technology and prehistoric archaeology. At LSE, Westermarck and Haddon taught from 1904; a chair in ethnology existed by 1923, and in 1928 a professorship in anthropology was created for Malinowski, in addition to readerships in social and in cultural anthropology, and regular teaching in physical anthropology.²

Unlike anthropology, sociology floundered in its attempts to define a field, and often appeared to be a residual discipline which

1. A. C. Haddon, 'A Brief History of the Study of Anthropology at Cambridge', 21 June 1923, MSS Room, Cambridge University Library.

2. Meyer Fortes, 'Social Anthropology at Cambridge since 1900', in *Readings in the History of Anthropology*, ed. Regna Darnell (New York, 1974), pp. 426-33.

studied 'those aspects of social life which have no special discipline devoted to them'.¹ The difficulties of defining sociology were compounded under the third and most important of the original teachers at LSE. It was the liberal social philosopher Leonard Trelawney Hobhouse who, more than anyone else, set the muddled direction of sociology in Britain.² In the first decade of British sociology Hobhouse played a part similar to Albion Small's pioneering venture in the United States, but without either Small's magnetism, his aptitude for organization, or his genuine social radicalism. By 1907, Hobhouse and Westermarck shared the newly-endowed Martin White chair of sociology at LSE, and Hobhouse edited the Society's new journal, *The Sociological Review*. But within the Society's council, chronic quarrels about the purpose of sociology led to Hobhouse's resignation as editor in 1910.³ Within a few years the *Review* deteriorated in quality, and an increasingly fragmented Society lost members to more specifically defined groups dealing with social psychology, public morality, biometrics, and eugenics. Each of these narrower groups concentrated exclusively upon a conspicuous social anomaly, and their promise of successful solution rested upon a set of hidden assumptions presented as objective social analysis. Members of eugenic societies, for example, confidently endorsed statistical surveys of degenerate conditions among the poor because they expected such studies to confirm scientifically their moral assumption about the desirability of controlling pauper procreation.⁴ It was much easier for one-cause social reformers to rally enthusiasm for a special civics project or a particular moral restraint than it was for introspective sociologists to attract sustained support for so amorphous and ill-defined a subject as general sociology.

Where, in that first optimistic decade, did sociology go wrong? From the initial meeting of the Sociological Society, three irreconcilable definitions of the purpose of sociology came into collision.⁵ Hobhouse wanted sociology to synthesize the varieties of social

1. Andreski, *The Uses of Comparative Sociology*, p. 60.

2. Hobhouse came to the teaching of sociology from a career in philosophy, comparative psychology and journalism. In 1896, while a tutor at Oxford, he published his *The Theory of Knowledge*. The following year he left Oxford for Manchester, used the zoo there for animal experiments and published his *Mind in Evolution* (1901). In 1902-4, he worked as a journalist in London, serving as political editor of the *Tribune* for a year and a half after 1904. He also worked actively in various areas of public service.

3. Branford, 'The Sociological Work of Leonard Hobhouse', 275-6.

4. *Biometrika* had been founded in 1902, the *Eugenics Review* in 1909. In 1912, the first International Eugenics Conference was held at the University of London under the presidency of Leonard Darwin. The following year, the British Medical Association formed a section on medical sociology with eugenics as its central concern. That year, the British Association for the Advancement of Science gave forty-seven grants for experimental studies in the physiology of heredity; *The Year Book of Social Progress for 1912* (London, 1913).

5. A fourth group, disclaiming any particular method or content, urged sociologists to provide the general staff and grand strategy for a scientific social

phenomena by means of a theory of social evolution. In contrast, Patrick Geddes, in his 'civics sociology', proposed that sociology start with detailed surveys of the geographical origins and cultural histories of cities. Eventually, these empirical studies would conclude, somehow, in a theoretical explanation of human thinking and conduct. The third school developed around Francis Galton's perception of social welfare as a problem in eugenic management. Each of the three approaches relied on its own reading of social evolution to verify its analyses and prescriptions. All the various factions wanted to understand complicated social phenomena, but they were limited by an acceptance of an evolutionary scheme that necessarily carried its own social imperatives. In effect, they reduced sociology to a mere exposition of their own moderate interpretation of social reform which they mistakenly assumed was inevitable. The new sociologists, of every faction, founded their expectations of approaching social harmony upon evidence of remarkable improvement in the quality of life. No one could deny that the new century brought greater opportunities for education, political participation, and the fulfilment of rising economic expectations. But in their search for demonstrations of continuing progress, the sociologists paid insufficient attention to the newer kinds of social problem that threatened any concept of progress. While continental and American sociologists were developing a theoretical apparatus to study individual alienation, the changing structure of the family, the manipulative effect of the new press, and the increasing clashes between social and economic interests, British sociologists treated these significant trends and their consequences as transient aberrations. British sociology, in the four decades before the Second World War, never attempted to understand, let alone explain, why there were growing social conflicts within neighbourhoods, factories, schools or families, characterized by a collision of complex, shifting, often irreconcilable rights. Sociologists in Britain failed to provide social reformers with systematic categories for assigning priorities to these various antagonistic interests. In lieu of a critical theory of social structure and function to guide social planning, social reformers turned away from frustrating areas of conflict to concentrate instead on particular, practical and manageable reforms. Unemployment insurance was popular with reformers as a route of social stability that could be accomplished without questioning the social merit of existing institutions. The design and implementation of an insurance policy did not require a radical or even a broad social theory as its prerequisite. While reformers ignored sociologists to work upon piecemeal projects, some sociologists seized upon genetic control as their social panacea while others turned to surveys of cities that lacked

policy. See Dr Warrington Lea, reply to Wenley's 'Sociology as an Academic Subject', 299, for a plea representative of a group without any influence.

not only explanatory hypotheses about the structure of a city but even a clear purpose for undertaking such research.

Hobhouse was the only genuine theorist among the new sociologists. But instead of committing himself wholeheartedly to the development of a modern theoretical sociology, Hobhouse had the 'role of sociologist thrust upon him'.¹ In 1907, just when he had ended his career in journalism to face dismally a depressing future which promised few intellectual or financial rewards, the new Martin White Chair at LSE came as a providential offer which he could hardly refuse. The accidental circumstances that made Hobhouse a sociologist and his limited teaching responsibilities at LSE contrast sharply with the missionary zeal of those who launched sociology in France, Germany, or America and used universities to expand their subject. Durkheim expected sociology to be the source of France's moral regeneration. His recognition of the irreversible collapse of French Imperial society after the Prussian victory of 1870 led him to conceive of sociology as a constructive response to the erosion of traditional certainties. To that end he tried to 'create a sociology which sees in the spirit of discipline the essential condition of all common life, while at the same time founding it on reason and truth'. In the autonomous field of sociology, 'only distinctive sociological training' could prepare the sociologist 'to group social facts intelligently'.² In his inaugural address at the University of Bordeaux in 1887, he called for objective methods, independent of biology, psychology or any other discipline, to explain social facts which were 'sui generis' with their 'own nature'.³ In common with German sociologists, Durkheim made historical studies of society an essential prerequisite of sociological analysis.⁴ Through their ascendant positions within the universities, Durkheim and his school taught how to collect and interpret historical and contemporary social data. On the basis of an understanding of social conduct and institutions derived from such data, they hoped that a rational collective conscience could be achieved.

1. Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, p. 209.

2. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), 8th ed., trans. Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller, ed. E. G. Catlin (New York, 1938), pp. 124, 145.

3. Durkheim, First part of his Inaugural Lecture at the University of Bordeaux, 1887, which appeared originally in *Revue Bleue* (1900); trans. Mark Traugott in *Emile Durkheim On Morality and Society, Selected Writings*, ed. with an Intro. by Robert N. Bellah (University of Chicago, 1973), pp. 12, 16-17.

4. Durkheim, Prefaces to *L'Année Sociologique*, i and ii, 345, 348. Weber's final work, delivered as a series of lectures at the University of Munich in the winter semester 1919-20, was devoted to 'Outlines of Universal Social and Economic History'. The lectures, compiled from Weber's notes and his students' lecture notes and edited by S. Hellman and M. Palyi, were published in 1923; an English translation by Frank H. Knight is entitled *General Economic History* (Glencoe, 1950). See Preface by the German editors, xvii-xviii. Georg Simmel's *Sociology* (1909) and Ferdinand Tönnies' *Community and Society* (1887) belonged to the same, characteristic German historical school.

Unlike Durkheim, Weber urged the sociologist not to intervene directly in social affairs. Weber belonged to the university tradition which had developed by defining learning, scholarship, or *wissenschaft* as abstract theoretical knowledge rather than applied practice. But empirical social science became Weber's essential bridge between abstraction and practice. In the process of generalization, he saw a 'precarious victory over the infinite complexity of facts'.¹ Social science was a means of analyzing social facts, an 'analytical ordering of empirical social reality'—achieved by a rigorous methodology and precise concepts. But it could not 'tell anyone what he *should* do', only 'what he *can* do—and under certain circumstances what he wishes to do'.² For Weber, sociology was a practical tool necessary for the explanation and interpretation of social phenomena. But he understood that an 'exhaustive causal investigation of any concrete phenomena in its full reality' was not only practically impossible but 'simply nonsense'. All social phenomena were 'individual', and the 'question of causality' was not a question of laws but of 'concrete causal *relationships*'. What knowledge we have of the social world was always limited to 'particular points of view'.³ Even though Weber insisted that sociology could provide neither truth nor scientific prediction, state universities and such research groups as Leopold von Wiese's Research Institute for Social Studies, founded in Cologne in 1919, supported sociology because of the discipline's overriding concern with the preservation of social cohesion. It was not until the 1920s that political differences among German sociologists led to radical criticism of the academic community of sociologists active since the 1890s.

American sociologists understood sociology as an indispensable study for intelligent, responsible citizenship. In 1898, Giddings wrote 'an elementary text-book', his *Elements of Sociology*, to prepare students for life-long understanding of 'society and public policy' by describing 'society in clear and simple scientific terms'.⁴ But it was not only zeal for a righteous cause that led American sociologists to careful definitions of their subject. Unlike Hobhouse, who saw very few students, the Americans taught a great variety of sociological subjects to expanding numbers of students. The case of Brown University in the first decade of the twentieth century is fairly typical. There, Lester F. Ward taught advanced courses from his chair in sociology. The rest of the Brown department, including James Q. Dealey, taught about 300 students a year, beginning in the sophomore

1. Bendix, p. 6.

2. Weber, "'Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy', 54, 60, 63.

3. *Ibid.* 78, 81. Cf. 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics', *Logos* (1917), reprinted in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, esp. p. 38, where Weber limits the use of the concept of 'progress' to technical innovations.

4. Franklin Giddings, Preface to 1898 edn. of *Elements of Sociology* (New York, 1913), p. vii.

year. Dealey confessed that the practical problems of teaching his subject to large classes 'has compelled us to limit ourselves to . . . the fundamental aspects of sociology, and hence we were under the necessity of deciding what those fundamentals were'. Dealey decided that although sociology was not yet a science, it must become one. Together with his colleagues at Brown, he emphasized methods of observation, comparative studies and a knowledge of historical development, supplemented by the statistical collection of data. Rhode Island, with a dense urban population, was used as a sociological laboratory. The main thrust of sociological teaching at Brown was to develop in students a 'sort of meliorism . . . not a visionary optimism, in essence, fatalism, but an optimism founded on scientific knowledge, on the conviction that the progress of civilization lies in men's hands, and that by scientific provision society can expedite its own development'.¹ Beginning with Small and continuing under Robert Park at Chicago, most American sociologists shared Dealey's views and his experiences. By 1926, the classes taught within American departments of sociology routinely included the physical basis of society, social geography, social adjustment, statistics, case studies, social surveys, the history of social thought, philanthropy, penology, cultural anthropology, primitive societies, social origins, educational sociology, and the sociology of religion.²

In England the theoretical and practical impulses for developing sociology were less stringent and less demanding than in America or on the continent. Hobhouse's sociology was not an instrument for either social criticism or social reconstruction. Moreover, because he had no expanding university constituency for whom a clear and intellectually satisfying delineation of basic principles and methods was important, his treatment of the discipline remained static and abstract. His sociology grew out of his moral and political difficulties with Spencer's social theory. Although explicitly repudiating the simplistic analysis associated with Spencer's progressive system, Hobhouse transformed the abandoned Spencerian sociology into an 'orthogenic' account of the biological and historical development of the ethical individual moving on a largely determined path towards a greater good caused by the improving character and circumstances of men.³ Beginning in 1896 with an Idealist epistemology, Hobhouse produced original studies in comparative psychology and comparative ethics that ended in a teleological theory of evolution. In *Morals in Evolution* (1906), he wanted to prove that all humanity shared a common history of moral progress. And in his one empirical study,

1. James Q. Dealey, 'The Teaching of Sociology', *Papers and Proceedings. Fourth Annual Meeting, American Sociological Society, 1909*, 177-8, 180, 182.

2. John Lewis Gillin, 'The Development of Sociology in the United States', *Papers and Proceedings. Twenty-first Annual Meeting, American Sociological Society, 1926*, 23-25.

3. Hobhouse, *Mind in Evolution* (London, 1901), pp. 5-10.

The Material Culture and Social Institutions of Simpler Peoples (1915), he tried to show how that progress actually had begun among primitive peoples. He had no doubt that social progress could be documented easily in the twentieth century, and he urged prospective sociologists to conceive of their studies essentially as inquiries into the nature, conditions, and possibilities of that progress.¹

Hobhouse's social theory could not simultaneously explain social progress and social dysfunction. His responses to the accumulating and perplexing evidence of rapid, erratic social change were increasingly inappropriate. His over-complacent social theory, along with an insistence that sociology must include all social science, was anachronistic as theory and practically irrelevant to those who asked the specialized social sciences for aid in planning and administering social policy. An unshakeable faith in the approaching harmonious coexistence of individuals, groups, and the state prevented him from confronting those social conflicts which determined the form and content of sociology in America and on the continent. Although 'the new liberal' Hobhouse never confused the ideal and the real as politically conservative Idealists did, he persisted, even after the First World War, in seeing an imminent convergence between his ideally harmonious society and the actual troubled society around him. As late as 1920, he could still believe that the steady advance of social organization and ethical, rational development could be demonstrated by means of 'sociology conceived as a science of facts and sociology conceived as a philosophy of values'.² Readily admitting a need for specialization within sociology, he subordinated such specialities to the explication of a 'larger evolution' which traces 'the one in the many, which is always the problem of supreme difficulty, but also of supreme interest for science'.³ After 1918, he defined sociology as ultimately a 'synthesis of the social studies' and more immediately as a search for the 'permanent factors on which society rests and from which social changes proceed'.⁴ The Idealist quest which inspired Hobhouse was fatal to sociology in England.

What did Hobhouse's sociology say to intellectuals, public officials, and social reformers who, before and after the Great War,

1. These themes appear in all of Hobhouse's writing; but see especially *Democracy and Reaction* (London, 1904), p. 116; and his 'Editorial' to the first issue of *The Sociological Review*, i (Jan. 1908), 11.

2. Hobhouse, 'Sociology', *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, xi (1920), 644. In 'The Sociological Work of L. T. Hobhouse', Branford claimed that Hobhouse's uncertainties about his role as a sociologist were resolved finally in the therapeutic writing of 'Sociology'. But while the completion of the essay may have been important to Hobhouse, the concepts which it contains had already appeared consistently in his sociological writings from at least 1906.

3. Hobhouse, 'The Roots of Modern Sociology', Inaugural Lecture as the first Martin White Professor of Sociology, 1907, reprinted in *Sociology and Philosophy. A centenary Collection of Essays and Articles*, with Preface by Sir Sydney Caine and an Introduction by Morris Ginsberg (London, 1966), p. 18.

4. Hobhouse, 'Sociology', 655.

were overwhelmed by the consequences of social change? Very little. Since his installation as the sole British professor of sociology, Hobhouse had saddled the new discipline with the task of discovering laws of social development to show that the 'supposed conflict between social justice and individual initiative disappears when it is seen that the higher the social order the greater the scope for the best qualities of those whom it protects'.¹ His proposed methods of procedure were no more helpful than his definitions of sociology because his concept of the subject entirely determined his advocacy of methods. 'Social morphology', potentially an organizing method, became instead an ahistorical assignment of importance only to historical events that fit his structural model.² Since sociology was synonymous with social continuity, described by Hobhouse under the rubric 'social evolution', it is hardly surprising that his theories were inapplicable to social phenomena thrown up by erratic and unpredictable discontinuities.³ In spite of his own ingenious psychological experiments at the Manchester zoo and his political reporting for the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Tribune*, Hobhouse insisted upon confining sociology within an evolutionary theory contradicted by the very experience of British life. He made sociology even less responsive to dramatic social conflicts by adopting a comparative method based upon what might be described as an essentially aesthetic yearning for the symmetry of social unity.

Hobhouse's social theory was uninteresting first because his explanation of social phenomena was incompatible with the daily experience of conflict in the turbulent pre-war years; and second, because the social prescriptions that flowed from his theories were already being acted upon by local and parliamentary agencies before he suggested them. When Hobhouse insisted that individuals could not control the qualities of their lives without legislative and economic opportunities, he was endorsing the new liberal wisdom. But that wisdom, turned into welfare legislation by the Liberal government swept into power in 1906, rapidly became conventional. Sociologists outside Britain examined the forces of change, continuity, and conflict which prevented social experience from becoming either rational or just. European and American sociology was exciting intellectually because it was both analytical and prescriptive. British sociology was dull because it never went beyond superficial, often wishful descriptions of social progress.

In France, Germany, and the United States, sociology was established by influential men such as Durkheim, Weber, and Small,

1. Hobhouse, 'The Roots of Modern Sociology', 12.

2. Hobhouse, *Social Evolution and Political Theory* (New York, 1911), p. 108.

3. In Hobhouse's teaching of sociology at LSE, the main course of lectures was on Social Evolution with 'social morphology' as 'the basis of social evolution'; Calendar, *London School of Economics*, 1908-9.

who imposed their concepts upon universities, students, and public institutions. But when times and circumstances changed, these founders and their theories were challenged successfully by newer social perceptions. British sociology was never established because it began without commanding leaders or intellectually powerful theories and because it was distracted immediately by divisive quarrels. At the end of the First World War, when Hobhouse's evolutionary sociology persisted as an ossified victor in a barren field, French, German, and American sociologists were engaged in fruitful debates about new political, economic, and social meanings for social theory. By the 1920s, German sociologists were split into irreconcilable political camps. At the new university of Cologne, von Wiese and Alfred Vierkandt established a productive tradition of politically moderate sociology which attempted to oppose sociologists of the right and of the left.¹ In France, sociology continued to be controlled by an earlier generation of Durkheimians into the 1930s. Then, young intellectuals interested in sociological questions often went abroad and brought back new ideas and new vitality to a stagnating subject. Raymond Aron went to Germany, Claude Lévi-Strauss to Brazil, Georges Friedmann to the Soviet Union, and Jean Stoetzel to the United States.² American sociology, firmly vested as a thriving, populous discipline by the 1920s, had never been an entirely homogeneous subject because the size of the country and the proliferation of universities allowed most sociologists to find congenial places. This was especially true after the formation of the New School for Social Research in 1918 had provided a professional home for the heterodox.³ Continental and American sociologists not only undertook empirical studies of conflict, violence, alienation, and dysfunction, but also constructed theoretical explanations of these unacceptable social phenomena in order to transcend them. But in Britain, Hobhouse, and his successor at LSE, Morris Ginsberg, persisted in descriptions of steady progress by individuals towards a social community that increasingly satisfied their moral and rational criteria.

After a close association with Hobhouse as his collaborator and sole disciple, Ginsberg inherited the Martin White chair and the field of sociology in 1930. Until 1939, when the Department was enlarged

1. On the right were Hans Freyer, Othmar Spann, and Werner Sombart; Ernst von Aster, Moritz Julius Bonn, Emil Lederer, Franz Oppenheimer, and Karl Mannheim stood clearly on the left; Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, pp. 227-36.

2. See Clark, 'The Structures and Functions of a Research Institute', 91, and *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 210-14, for detailed discussions of the positions of the Durkheimians within French intellectual life.

3. Dorothy Ross, 'The Development of the Social Sciences', in *The Organisation of Knowledge in America*, eds. Alexandra Oelson and John Voss (Johns Hopkins University, 1979).

beyond a permanent professor (Ginsberg), and a reader to include two lecturers, Ginsberg 'was sociology'.¹ For the twenty-four years of Ginsberg's teaching at LSE, Hobhouse's vision of an organic rationality, intelligible only by means of a theory of development, remained ascendant.² Ginsberg persisted in viewing the 'ultimate object of sociology' as the working out of the 'full theoretical implications of a self-directed humanity' and the 'inquiry' into the 'possibilities of its realization'.³ Even Hobhouse's biological metaphors were perpetuated by his disciple's definition of sociology as 'the study of the society . . . of the . . . tissue of human interactions and interrelations'.⁴ Ginsberg's concepts, rhetoric, and sense of the development of his field, all taken from his mentor, continued the evolutionary, progressive bias that had blinkered Hobhouse's perception of social conflict.⁵

Unlike Hobhouse, his successor was well aware of the growth of those social forces, pressures, and conflicts which undermined an understanding of sociology as a study of progressive development. But for the rest of his career, Ginsberg argued that in human history as a whole, the cooperative principle had gained consistently over principles of conflict. Moreover, he continued Hobhouse's ethical and rational criteria of progress to maintain that the most developed countries were those which had provided the greatest opportunities for the realization of human capacities with a minimum of coercion. On the eve of the holocaust, Ginsberg was convinced that 'material, mental, and moral phenomena were leading to a reconciliation of order and liberty on a world scale'.⁶ And when the terrible war finally ended, the sole British professor of sociology could still discover 'trends' that proved 'on the whole an increasing rationalization of moral rules, a growing internationalization and individualization of

1. Ronald Fletcher, Intro. to *The Science of Society and the Unity of Mankind. A Memorial Volume for Morris Ginsberg*, ed. R. Fletcher (London, 1974), p. 6. In 1946, the London Department of Sociology was expanded to a staff of two professors including Ginsberg, and seven other teachers: Sydney Caine, 'Ginsberg at L.S.E.', in Fletcher, *The Science of Society*, p. 31. Ginsberg remained as Head of the Department until 1954, and he led the British Sociological Society as Chairman from 1951-54 and as first President from 1955-57.

2. Morris Ginsberg, 'The Work of L. T. Hobhouse', in J. A. Hobson and Morris Ginsberg, *L. T. Hobhouse, His Life and Work* (London, 1931), p. 249.

3. Ginsberg, *Sociology* (London, 1934), p. 234.

4. Ginsberg, 'The Problems and Methods of Sociology' (1939), reprinted in Ginsberg, *Reason and Unreason in Society. Essays in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (London, 1947), p. 1. Cf. Hobhouse's definition of sociology as 'the study of human society . . . the tissue of relations into which human beings enter with one another'; 'Sociology', 654.

5. Ginsberg's explanation of the origins of sociology cites the same four roots – political philosophy, the philosophy of history, biological theories of evolution, and movements for social and political reform – which Hobhouse had delineated in his inaugural lecture in 1907: Ginsberg, 'The Problems and Methods of Sociology', 2; Hobhouse, 'The Roots of Modern Sociology', 4-11.

6. Ginsberg, 'The Problems and Methods of Sociology', 30-1.

the moral conscience and a tendency towards universalism'.¹ With a consistency rare in most social theorists, Ginsberg chose as his topic, for the advent of the British Sociological Association in 1952, the 'idea of progress'.² By holding to an inadequate explanation of social phenomena, Hobhouse and Ginsberg wasted their potential influence as the only university professors of sociology before the Second World War. In a very real sense, these two prevented the development of an effective school of British sociology as social thought because they perpetuated an obsolete theory without social meaning. It is ironic that both men, so convinced of the reality of continuous, progressive development, should have developed so little in their own intellectual lives.

An entirely different definition of sociology was provided by Patrick Geddes and his fervent disciple, Victor Branford. Geddes, a Scot who had studied biology with Huxley and zoology with Henri Lacaze-Duthiers, and Branford, a successful financier, came to sociology with training as natural scientists. They brought to their 'applied science' of civics a biological analysis of organisms as a model for the explanation of the life of cities. Civics sociology described cities as living entities which could be best understood by a study of the functions of their constituents. Hobhouse, in a policy editorial in the *Sociological Review*, welcomed sociology as a 'vitalizing principle' sweeping through all social investigation to reveal the 'whole in the parts and returning from the study of the parts to the whole'.³ The civic sociologists began with the parts. Geddes' view of the city of Edinburgh from the perspective of his Outlook Tower, a civic museum on a hill, led him to expect that the proper study of sociology must proceed from such a vantage point. Through regional surveys of the history, character, and geography of cities, the civic sociologists proposed to unite speculative and practical people. Their science started in dispersed, narrow studies of cities and concluded in an organic theory of society. But the civic sociologists never developed a plausible method for transition from their empirical practice to an explanatory theory. After the war, they gave up their theoretical ambitions altogether and retreated to surveys and town

1. Ginsberg, 'Moral Progress', The Frazer Lecture at the University of Glasgow, 18 Apr. 1944, reprinted in *Reason and Unreason in Society*, p. 320.

2. Ginsberg's Chairman's Address at the first General Meeting of the British Sociological Association, 22 Mar. 1952, was expanded into the first chapter of his *The Idea of Progress: A Revaluation* (Boston, 1953): see especially p. 42. Cf. Robert Bierstadt, 'Once More the Idea of Progress', in Fletcher, *Science and Society*, p. 63.

3. L. T. Hobhouse, 'Editorial', 8. Geddes, like Hobhouse, thought of evolution as leading behaviour to increasingly 'species-regarding' or more 'altruistic, more moral' ends; Patrick Geddes, 'A Theory of the Consumption of Wealth', *Report of the Sixtieth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Leeds, September 1890* (London, 1891), 924. See Geddes, 'Civics: As Applied Sociology', *Sociological Papers*, i (London, 1904), and 'Civics: As Concrete and Applied Sociology, Part II', *ibid.* ii (London, 1905).

planning. Even from the beginning the civics group had relied entirely on Frederick Le Play's formulas of 'place, work, folk (family)' to provide a framework for description.¹ In 1920, Le Play House was established by the Branfords as a centre for civics work. That same year, the *Sociological Review* became their organ, and in 1924 they launched another journal accurately named *Observation* which lasted only for six years. When Branford died in 1930, the defunct Sociological Society and Le Play House merged to form the Institute of Sociology which elected R. R. Marett as its president. Considering the absolute scarcity of sociologists, it is not surprising that the Institute's first president was the Reader in Social Anthropology at Oxford from 1910 to 1936. Civics sociologists greatly stimulated geographical studies and projects of urban renewal, but they had no effect upon the creation of systematic professional sociology.² They observed and described cities and their populations as integrated biological organisms. Through their organicism, they tried to avoid the bitter contemporary debate about the roles of nature and nurture. As environmentalists, Geddes and his followers argued that a rational civic atmosphere was bound to produce rational citizens, since the character of an organism determined the nature of its parts. Hobhouse, too, actively supported nurture over nature, except that he emphasized the role of the individual. In 1911, he entered the fray with an essay on 'The Value and Limits of Eugenics'. It was the irresistible force of rational individual will, Hobhouse argued, that moved social evolution to overcome both environment and heredity.³

Unlike either Hobhouse or the civics group, the eugenicists, the last of the three contending interests within the Sociological Society, adopted Francis Galton's hereditarian biology. Galton, a doctor who was a close friend and cousin of Charles Darwin, attempted to demonstrate an irrefutable case for nature by applying deductive statistics to the laws of chance. As early as 1876, he was convinced of the determinism of heredity, and in 1885, as a result of the psychometric measurements at his first 'anthropometric laboratory', he produced composite photographs of 'Jewish' and other 'types' that were 'pictorial equivalents of those elaborate statistical tables out

1. Harper, 'Sociology in England', 341. See esp. Frederick Le Play's *L'Organisation de la Famille* (1871) and *L'Organisation du Travail* (1870).

2. G. Duncan Mitchell, *A Hundred Years of Sociology* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 16-17; Lewis Mumford, 'Patrick Geddes, Victor Branford, and Applied Sociology in England: The Social Survey, Regionalism and Urban Planning', *An Introduction to the History of Sociology*, H. E. Barnes (ed.) (Chicago, 1948), p. 678; Geoffrey Hawthorne, *Enlightenment and Despair. A History of Sociology* (Cambridge, Eng., 1976), p. 167; and R. J. Halliday, 'The British Sociological Movement, the Sociological Society and the Genesis of Academic Sociology in Britain', *Sociological Review*, n.s. xiv (1968), 380-5.

3. L. T. Hobhouse, 'The Value and Limits of Eugenics', *Social Evolution and Political Theory* (London, 1911).

of which averages are deduced'.¹ Then, in his *Natural Inheritance* (1889), he moved from shaky statistical analogies to social prescription. The message of the book was that progress must be understood only as the social control of the undesirable biological tendencies transmitted inexorably through inheritance.² Following Galton's call, the eugenicists' targets in the early twentieth century were first, the indiscriminate social effects of natural selection, and second, misguided attempts to use philanthropy and legislation to support the naturally unfit. Like everyone else drawn to sociology, the eugenicists wanted to attack social problems with 'scientific' weapons. To the eugenicists sociology was an applied science of population control necessary because of the deterministic effect of genetics upon individuals.³

To combat the social consequences of natural selection, the eugenicists urged national jurisdiction over the multiplication of the genetically incompetent, who always turned out to be the poor, and national encouragement of the proliferation of their betters. The fit qualities of the latter—'health, energy, ability, manliness, and courteous disposition'—were drawn from what Galton described as his own 'useful class'.⁴ Going even further than Galton, William McDougall, the founder of an instinctualist social psychology, advocated legislative bonuses for public servants and university professors who married early and reproduced quickly.⁵ The eugenicists' second goal, combating promiscuous charity, was to be met by mobilizing the resources of the Sociological Society. Sociologists were to be instructed first to collect facts that would demonstrate hereditarian laws, and then to disseminate eugenic programmes based on those facts. Although the Society was willing to provide a forum for eugenicist discussion, the great majority of its members refused to devote themselves solely to eugenicist ends. As a result of the Society's reluctance to equate sociology and eugenics, the

1. *Photographic News* xxviii (17 Apr. 1885), 243–5. Galton discussed the meaning of the photographs in 'Generic Images', *Nineteenth Century* vi (July 1897), 162.

2. Francis Galton's *Natural Inheritance* (London, 1889), led Karl Pearson to develop Galton's naive statistics into a formidable tool of analysis: Karl Pearson, *Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton*, vol. iii (Cambridge, 1930), p. 57.

3. See especially, Francis Galton, 'A Eugenic Investigation. Index to Achievements of Near Kinsfolk of Some of the Fellows of the Royal Society', *Sociological Papers* ii (London, 1905); 'Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims', *ibid.* i; 'Restrictions in Marriage', *ibid.* ii, and 'Studies in National Eugenics', *ibid.* ii. The Biometric and Galton Laboratories at the University of London issued an avalanche of Eugenic Laboratory Publications – 83 of them by 1923 – including the famous Memoir, *The Influence of Parental Alcoholism on the Physique and Intelligence of the Offspring* by Ethel M. Elderton (the Galton Fellow), assisted by Karl Pearson (London, 1910). Pearson wrote more than half of these publications.

4. Francis Galton, 'Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims', 46.

5. William McDougall, 'A Practical Eugenic Suggestion', *Sociological Papers* iii (London, 1906), 76–8. McDougall's major work appeared in 1908 as *Social Psychology* (London, 1908).

eugenicist cause moved to the Galton Laboratory and the Biometric Institute, both at the University of London. In pre-war Europe, where national prestige depended upon a productive population, eugenicists tried to prove that the quality of a population could best be ensured by a eugenics policy based upon quantitative data. While most eugenicists stood solidly on the right, some, such as Havelock Ellis, J. A. Thomson and Sidney Webb, endorsed both eugenics and social reform. These 'progressive' eugenicists, along with reformers, relied upon social policy to achieve social ends through nurture as well as nature. After the First World War, this progressive minority grew more influential within a Eugenics Society increasingly concerned with such reformist interests as economic independence for women, family allowances, family planning, population research, and social reforms.¹ But the eugenicists continued to be challenged by most biologists and repudiated by the great majority of social reformers. They were even less successful in providing an attractive content for sociology than were Hobhouse or the civic sociologists.

Even the most sanguine supporter of sociology had to concede, after the first decade, that the new discipline had produced very few theoretical or practical results. Disputes about methodology distracted the various factions from their failure to devise new and useful social analysis or prescriptions. Active social reformers ignored sociologists and tried to learn about social policy from their own participation in agencies such as the university settlements. Reformers could alternatively rely upon what Beatrice Webb described in 1906 as a 'scientific method' of social inquiry. The Webbs followed a commonsense method of observation, conjecture about cause and effect, and verification through new observation. This method was evident in A. L. Bowley's sampling techniques and W. H. Beveridge's investigations of unemployment.² But the Webbs and the other social investigators lacked the kind of cohesive social theory that would have enabled them to explain, rather than simply collect, social data. A difficulty of this purely empirical method, although unsuspected then, was that it did not equip an innocent inquirer with any means of discrimination in the selection of his data.

1. Michael Freeden, in 'Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity', *The Historical Journal* xxii:3 (1979), 645-71, makes a strong case for eugenicists of the left whose programme for a healthy population included social reform as well as voluntary hereditarian constraints.

2. Beatrice Webb, 'Methods of Investigation', *Sociological Papers*, iii (London, 1906), 345. This was meant as an introduction to a major collaborative work with Sidney Webb. Beatrice wrote a number of chapters in 1921, Sidney amended and added to them in early 1932 and the book finally appeared later that year, when Beatrice was 74, as Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Methods of Social Study* (Cambridge, 1932). W. H. Beveridge reported the results of his early studies on unemployment to the Sociological Society as 'The Problem of Unemployment', *Sociological Papers*, iii (London, 1906), 328-38. A. L. Bowley's surveys, begun in 1912, were published with A. R. Burnett-Hurst as *Livelihood and Poverty* (London, 1915).

Even more prejudicial for accurate explanation, the 'commonsense' approach often concealed *a priori* conclusions, even from sophisticated students. The social planning which began in 1906 and was accelerated after 1918 required large quantities of analyzed data. Gradually, social students realized that they must devise efficient means for discovering and understanding that data. But most reformers tacitly accepted Hobhouse's belief in social institutions as the products of rational and moral purposes. Until the 1930s, they did not take seriously evidence of social irrationality.

It was not until the 1950s, after years of overwhelming economic and political irrationality, that sociology was recognized as a discipline in England. At the universities of Birmingham, Hull, Leicester, Manchester and Oxford, sociology departments were founded in imitation first of American and then later of European models.¹ After the Second World War, the enormous and unprecedented need for national reconstruction demanded some kind of theoretical guidance, at least in the form of a reasoned analysis of alternative courses of action and some systematic anticipation of the consequences of those courses. In a battered post-war society sociology claimed acceptance as a systematic social science capable of constructive social planning.² In America, France, and Germany, from the turn of the century, policy makers had encouraged professional sociologists to provide both data and theory for legislation and administration. But in Britain, amateur phil-anthropists, parliamentary under-secretaries, untrained civil servants, and inexperienced local government officers managed to deal rather successfully, although piecemeal, with those social problems claimed by sociologists to be within their professional jurisdiction. Whatever general principles existed in policies for the poor law, local taxation, labour organization, unemployment insurance, and public works, were not extracted from sociological analysis but came rather from administrative remedies 'primarily pragmatic' in their 'motives and aims'.³

In its formative years before 1914, British sociology was exhausted by superficial, repetitious, and rending debates about form which

1. W. G. Runciman, *Sociology in its Place, and other Essays* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 4.

2. In 1946, Sir John Clapham's Privy Council Committee on social and economic research in Britain found that the few chairs existing in the social sciences were used still to train social workers. Sociology was 'not yet thought respectable', and there was only a beginning in the study of social questions. *Privy Council. Office of Treasury: Report of the Committee on the Provision for Social and Economic Research* (London, 1946), p. 8.

3. Jose Harris, *Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Policy 1886-1914* (Oxford, 1972), p. 363. Harris presents a compelling, but not entirely persuasive, argument for the view that government intervention in problems of unemployment was not motivated by the cumulative processes of government growth, by economic analysis, or by theories of collectivism, but rather by pragmatic causes.

ignored the more fundamental issue of contents. That premature exhaustion, from which British sociology recovered only after the Second World War, led to a failure to produce either compelling theoretical analysis or methodical practical programmes. The three major protagonists—Hobhouse, the civics group, and the eugenicists—were interested in entirely different kinds of problems. None were willing to agree even on the characteristics that separated sociology from political theory, psychology, geography, anthropology, economics, ethics, or social history. The one common assumption bringing them close to an area of possible discourse was, unfortunately, a perception of society as an evolutionary organism developing through adaptation, whether inherited as the eugenicists maintained or, as Hobhouse and the civics group believed, acquired. Each of the three shaped their own sociologies into descriptive studies of that development rather than into tools of penetrating social analysis. An essentially conservative sociology, following logically from the biological models they all adopted, could do little more than explain the nature and conditions of social evolution. A creative social theory did not appear out of the debilitating debates because the debaters all agreed that existing institutions and conventions required only limited reform.

Some historians argue that professions exist essentially to protect a dominant, closed elite from theoretical and practical challenges within the discipline and from attempts from without to gain access to their privileges.¹ Others maintain that professions can persist only because they encourage and reward ability equitably and effectively.² Both are viable arguments and evidence for either, or both comfortably together, can be found within particular professions. But in the long run, the success of a discipline is not determined by its powers of protection or patronage. Historically, successful professions have maintained a monopoly over a special body of knowledge and skills. Traditions of learning within a profession have been tested by their ability to understand, explain, and resolve pressing problems within experience. Medicine has been among the most successful because it has clients whose life, or at least well being, may depend exclusively on the doctor's expert application of his learning. But sociologists, without a clearly recognizable body of ideas or practice or an effective system of control over their own activities, were unable to persuade any clientele that they offered a professional service 'of real benefit to the public'.³

1. This point of view is best argued by Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism. The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York, 1976).

2. See especially, Thomas L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science. The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (University of Illinois, 1977).

3. See Harold Perkin, 'Professionalism and the Game of Life: Britain since 1800',

Persuasiveness does not rest merely on the internal consistency of explanatory principles. Where sociology has evaluated social problems with critical precision, as in France, Germany, and the United States, the public, intellectuals, and government have found the discipline to be of real benefit. In these countries, during the four decades before the Second World War, sociologists established a profession that responded directly to intensely-articulated feelings of injustice and to demonstrated unrest. In Britain, until after the Second World War, a myopic faith in social evolution prevented sociologists from reorganising systematically the realities of social dysfunction and disorder. Sociology failed in Britain because it lacked an intellectually vital conceptual core.

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15, an unpublished MS generously made available to me by the author, for a general discussion of the relation between professionals and their public.