

THE TRUE LIFE

SOCIOLOGY OF THE SUPERNATURAL

by LUIGI STURZO

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PATERSON, N. J.

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BY LUIGI STURZO

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- Essai de Sociologie*, Bloud et Gay, Paris, 1935
- **Politics and Morality*, Burns, Oates and Washbourne, London, 1938
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He must also mention here his brother Mario, the late Bishop of Piazza Armerina (Sicily), who, maintaining constant contact with the author through writings and letters on philosophical and mystical subjects, gave him inspiration and help in composing this book.

Jacksonville, Florida

January 5, 1943

THE TRUE LIFE

"...*ad vitam quae vera vita est...*"

(ST. AUGUSTINE, TRACT. 120 IN JOANNEM)

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INTRODUCTION

THE true life is life complete on every side, corresponding to all our deepest aspirations and forming the highest synthesis of our potentialities and activities. The true life is that of the spirit at its highest level, where alone inner discords and contradictions may find appeasement and every want and pain be satisfied, comforted, transcended.

This life is the supernatural life, to which we have been predestined and called by God, not through the exigency of nature but by a gift of His goodness, a gift that raises and ennobles us, calling us to fellowship with God and plunging us in the abyss of His mystery.

The supernatural life is not something accidental added to or superimposed on man's life of nature; it is a real transformation of human existence and activity. While on the surface man's life as a reasonable animal remains what it is, with all its wretchedness, it acquires another, inner principle to which its own forces could never attain and which, unifying it, gives it the supernatural imprint.

In the face of this transforming reality, the conception of an exclusively natural life becomes quite a mental or methodological abstraction; just as it is possible to make abstraction of man's intellectual life, analyzing only his animal element. Yet such analysis will not be complete, for not a few phenomena of our sense-life can be explained only by the influence of thought and of consciousness; and in the same way a great part of natural life must remain dark with-

out a supernatural explanation. It is possible also for man, subconsciously or deliberately, to attempt a renunciation of the higher life, striving to limit his activity to what he regards as natural. In both cases, that of intellectual abstraction and that of practical renunciation, he runs away from reality.

As will be seen throughout the present work, it is not metaphor nor hyperbole to call the supernatural life the true life; for while the supernatural life implies no denial, but indeed the perfecting, of the natural life, since without it there cannot even be wholesome enjoyment of all that nature offers, neither can we without it develop all our spiritual forces, or hold ourselves intellectually immune from errors, or win moral victory over faults, or attain the destination that gives meaning to the immortality of the spirit, or reach that communion with God which makes us sharers in His very nature. This is why I have affixed to my book the title *The True Life*.

* * * * *

The subtitle, *Sociology of the Supernatural*, must sound strange to the general run of readers, and calls for a preliminary explanation of how sociology may venture to the threshold of the divine. There is such confusion of ideas on sociology, held as it has been within the boundaries of nature, that the need of carrying it into the supernatural field has not been clearly recognized. I intend to face here a problem of capital importance, and, in venturing to present a solution, I hope that my endeavor will inspire others of riper preparation than myself to renew the trial.

Sociology, as a neologism formed by combining two words, Latin and Greek, means literally "discourse (*science*) of society." Such a science is not a study of society in the

abstract as a metaphysical entity, nor a study from the moral standpoint of what society should be in political and economic or other fields, but it is a study of society as it is in the concrete — its origins, structure, form, character, process — with the aim of discovering the inner laws that are bound up with its very nature. This is the way in which sociology is a science. Its study can be divided up into branches, it can be carried on by particular analyses of this or that question, but there will be no true sociology if the branches are not united to the tree, if analysis is not brought back to synthesis the better to understand society in its concrete and living complexity. To fulfil its scientific purpose sociology should carry the study of society in the concrete into the fourth dimension, that of time, considering the formation of society from its most rudimentary beginnings down to the most advanced stage of present reality, seeking to divine the purposive tendencies that it reveals and to understand its orientation towards the future.

With this in view, society must be taken in its living nature and not reduced to a conceptual hypostasis, or, worse, considered as a mysterious being outside and above the individuals of whom it is composed, a kind of divinity informing the personality of the separate individuals and endowing them, by means of collective coercion, with a potentiality foreign to their nature. Society is nothing other than the operative coexistence of individuals in an inexhaustible process. There cannot be either individuals without society or society without individuals. Society is not a *tertium quid*, presupposing the single individual and coexisting individuals, or else forming individuality by means of association. Society exists and coexists only through individuals.

The second chapter of Genesis touches on this social fact in the divine dictum: "*It is not good for man to be alone; let*

Us make him a help like unto himself. . . ." Society is born with Eve, the woman, intimate formation of the very body of man: "*This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of a man.*" It is impossible to imagine a greater intimacy or a more effectual fellowship. The whole of society is the projection of individuals in their relationship and inter-activity; the more living and continuous this projection is, the broader the relationships involved, the more intense and constant the activity of each single member, then the wider, more effective and more deeply rooted is the society they form.

We now ask: Why should not the study of sociology be extended to that supernatural life which forms a special synthesis, indeed the ultimate and pacifying synthesis, of society as a whole? Sociology belongs to the group which we call, to distinguish them from the physical and natural sciences, the moral sciences. There has been an endeavor, it is true, to reduce sociology to a biophysical or psychological science, but in so doing analogy is made to change places with scientific postulate in an attempt to confuse the data of man's free activity with his material environment; or else the psychological experiences of the individual or of associated individuals are transferred to the social entity as to a special kind of psychophysical being. True sociology is the science of society in its concrete existence and in its historical development. If the supernatural is a historical and social fact, it must fall within the field of sociological investigation.

Even positivist sociologists have felt the need of studying the phenomena of morals and of religion as proper objects of their science. Yet there are two errors to be imputed to their system — that of eliminating or minimizing the freedom of the individual and that of abandoning any idea of the supernatural. Hence they reduce religion, as a social fact,

to pure naturalism or to a political moralism fostered by the dominant classes for their own interest. Such errors spring from considering sociology an experimental science of external facts, and eliminating both philosophy, as a metaphysical construction, and history, as the inner process of society.

What is strange is that these sociologists believe that their study of the facts, their experimentalism, is a truly critical study which will enable them, by comparison and statistics, to discover the sociological laws. Criticism is valid only insofar as it rests on principles that guide investigation and appraisal, and insofar, moreover, as these are founded on the certitude of truth. It would be a mistake, of course, to think that positivist sociologists wholly lack principles to guide their research; even in pure experimentalism there must be general criteria. But these sociologists are not aware of this, and hence, for want of that philosophy which they despise, they do not subject their principles and methods to critical examination.

Here, at bottom, is the cause of their failure to perceive the inner character of history. For the true sociologist, history is simply society itself viewed in its temporal activity, that is, in the process of its existence. Is there any other way of learning to know a living being? Society is not a museum piece, set in a glass case, petrified into the immobility of death, the witness to a past already extinct. Society, while obeying the basic laws of human life, has always its historical novelty, its aspects of revelation, its inward dynamism. It is precisely history — not the outer history of the material facts but their inner reason, their logical connection, the metaphysic to which they give birth — that enables us to learn the laws of our social nature.

With a deepening of sociologico-historical research we see clearly how false is the conception of society as the blindly determined product of natural forces, without realization

that the freedom and responsibility of individuals play an essential part. And it is history too that attests the supernatural fact as existing and inscribed in the human process, thus opening to us a window on the invisible world.

A certain type of sociology has confined itself to studying the various social institutions in what are taken for primitive peoples, with the idea — a purely literary one — that there we shall find nature unsophisticated and almost in a pure state; or else with the idea — this time pseudo-scientific — that there we shall find the initial germ of social evolution. The very men who proclaim that experimentation must proceed without the interference of any general principle, assume on their own account such arbitrary principles as the innate naturalism of savage tribes and a social evolutionism from the savage to the civilized: principles that cannot be verified without philosophy and without history.

Unfortunately, sociology was sired by positivism. Up till now it has been almost a positivist monopoly. The positivist method, applied to the special branches of sociology or to the classification of determined social data, has produced interesting studies and penetrating analyses, and has advanced the knowledge of social structure; but all this material lacks a soul, it does not rise to human value, it cannot find a scientific synthesis.

* * * * *

One of the reasons why sociology has been kept in a closed compartment is that historians, philosophers and theologians — who should be concerned with it — not only do not recognize its scientific character but question whether sociology may be described as special branch of study, with its own proper object.

In another book, *Essai de Sociologie*,¹ the present writer sought to place sociology on such a plane that no one wishing to study it could deny it the character of a special science. As has been said, its object is the study of society in the concrete. If in analysis it is possible to study one side rather than another and to stress this rather than that, for synthesis it is necessary to embrace all human manifestations and all the social forms in their concrete outcome, which is society in act and in process. If one of the various social manifestations is omitted from the synthesis through arbitrary preconceptions or irrational methods, the result is an anti-scientific mutilation; and if the temporal measure is omitted from sociology, it is deprived of the means of studying the social rhythm and its inward life.

A fossil exists in space but no longer in time, save as a witness to the past. Yet the fossil participates in time because, as its antiquity grows, it renders an ever more interesting testimony to the past by the fact that it has survived when time has swept away so many others. Thus the fossil becomes historicized, it becomes alive again in human thought. But the society seen by certain sociologists as an unmoving morphology or structure is worse than the fossil — which as such has still its reality; for such a society, taken out of time, is never experienced as living, and does not bear witness to its past because it remains an in-existent abstraction. We must and should study the morphology of society; but if we wish to hold fast to the concrete, we shall take society at a given point of the globe and at a given historical date and shall examine it in the concrete, seeking the constant elements it has in common with other societies in other places and at other times. And we shall always inquire into the title-deeds of its formation, that

1. *Essai de Sociologie*, Bloud & Gay, Paris, 1935.

is, its origin and history, the value of its institutions, their rational and moral, political and economic, natural and supernatural significance, and the trends of action and social finalities that mean its historical projection into the future. In doing this we are systematizing the constant data of society in the concrete into principles of value. It is then that historiography, philosophy, theology — which in the course of our studies we shall encounter as conspicuous manifestations of associated life — will bring the light of their laws and deductions to verify the sociological data of value.

What is important to fix as a point of departure is that human life, whether individual or social, is one; thought and speculation are one, though distinguished according to matters of study and groups of matters; society is one in the multiplicity of peoples and social characteristics and forms. How, then, can sociology be presented as a self-sufficient construction isolated from human thought, rejecting any intervention from history, philosophy, theology, and arrogating to itself the position of true and sole interpreter of society? Only by making sociology take upon itself the functions of history, philosophy and theology. This absurdity has been attempted by those who have established a *primum sociologicum*, like Durkheim with his "sociologism." Indeed, this theory of society as the whole (we might call it the theory of "creative society") is precisely a theology, and his society is a divinity.

On the other hand, the endeavors of the sociologists who profess a spiritualist philosophy have either failed through making sociology a slight variant of political economy on the one hand and of moral philosophy on the other, or else have been inadequate, seeking to introduce into sociology the principle of free will in combination with a limited determinism either psychological or mechanical.

Sociology needs to be revised from top to bottom, utilizing all the scientific and historical gains made in the past hundred years through many new and most useful studies, in order to give it the integral character it deserves as the study of society in the concrete. It is time to stop restricting the whole of sociology to analytic research, classifying material facts which as such are barely comprehensible, and framing them in provisional and incomplete schemes without real significance — it is time to abandon the abstractionism based on deterministic interpretations of collective activity and social fact as though these were removed from the action of individual men.

The reader may think that the charge of abstractionism is aimed at theoretical philosophy rather than at scientific sociology; this has been the current and unchallenged opinion. Here, however, abstractionism does not mean the legitimate derivation of a theory from facts, but an interpretation of concrete reality which makes abstraction of its essential factors and their concrete syntheses. Let us take an example that will bring us back to the theme of the present work. Philosophers and theologians study natural man as related to or opposed to supernatural man. When they analyze the factors that make up human nature they are engaged on a useful, indeed a necessary study, enabling us to understand in what that nature truly consists; theirs is therefore a scientific work. But if some among them were to claim to have thereby discovered natural man in the concrete with no shadow of the supernatural about him, or else supernaturalized man stripped of all natural characteristics, they would be guilty of abstractionism: that is, of presenting as concrete what is a mental abstraction of their own, of presenting as a synthesis what has been only their philosophical or theological analysis.

As we shall see, the mistake of conceiving of natural man as actually existing is not confined to sociologists but is shared by philosophers and theologians. However, the latter are capable of self-criticism and have the instruments for it, which sociologists lack. Yet sociologists too have at hand many data that might well lead them to question their naturalistic conception; for a mass of religious phenomena, considered in their nature and in their historical process, cannot be reconciled with the naturalistic thesis or the deterministic theories of environment put forward by so-called scientific sociology. That is why I accuse it of abstractionism: it presents a society in the abstract above or below the concrete of actual facts and their intrinsic value and significance.

Can it be denied that those who reject individual freedom and reduce the social fact to a mechanism of coercion are abstracting from reality? In sociology we must always clearly distinguish what is free individual initiative entering into the life of the social nucleus, from its conditioning social environment. This environment is formed through free human activities, which create a social structure or scaffolding necessary to the further action of individual men. But the social environment itself can and must be surpassed and transcended by the same free human activity. The study of this individual-social cycle presupposes an initial recognition of individual liberty and of its influence in social life, which sociology partly borrows from philosophy and partly verifies by its own means.

There is no lack of sociologists who frankly admit free individual initiative, or at least presuppose it in their works, but I know of no sociologist who as such admits that there can be a free supernatural initiative through divine action entering into mankind and being freely received and reactivated by men. I do not say there are no Christian sociologists who believe by faith in the divine revelation; what I do say is that

even their sociology remains on the purely natural plane — as if a natural society really existed free from any influence of the supernatural, when, on the contrary, all that does exist is a society making a real synthesis with the supernatural. This is the subject of the present study: the supernatural life in human society as integrating, synthesizing and transcending nature — the supernatural life viewed both as the divine initiative towards man and as man's response to the divine summons.

* * * * *

Those who do not understand what the supernatural in man and in society is, may perhaps mock at the idea of a sociology of the supernatural. But not the theologians, although to their ears the phrase may sound novel and perhaps almost profane. St. John speaks of a society with God and with His Son as a single "fellowship with us," the followers of Christ: "*that you also may have fellowship with us and that our fellowship may be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*" (1 John 1:3). The present book will bring out what type of society this fellowship represents — its nature, its value, its reflections. Both the inward relationship of the soul to God and the relationship of each man to others (his neighbors) form, from the supernatural viewpoint, a single society, for the bond that unites them is one: Christ, faith in Him, the grace He has won for us, His function as Head of the faithful and Head of mankind. The social bond is one: love. If this love has two objects, God and man's neighbor, this does not mean that the love itself is or can be divided, as if a man could love God without loving his neighbor, or love his neighbor without loving God. Hence our gratitude to God, not only personal and inward but social and public, is involved at the same time as our whole life of relationship with other

men, without exception, as the actuation of a love conceived as an outpouring of God in us, in a single society.

Can there be a more radical transformation of the character of a society than when at the center of our relationships there is a disinterested, purifying and transforming love? and when this love has the inner force to oppose the hatreds, jealousies and pride which perturb and dissolve human fellowship? The sociologist cannot deny the transformation effected by Christianity, whether he regards it from the historical point of view, or compares Christian societies with non-Christian, or truly Christian societies with those which are Christian in name only or which have degenerated in faith and morals. All the naturalistic explanations cannot suffice to elucidate the reason for such a transformation. How, for example, is the general adoption of monogamic marriage to be explained? It is true that monogamy is to be found outside Christianity, but without the moral features, or the scope or the same beneficent results. Christianity alone has been able to render this immense service to mankind, thus providing a most important means of civilization.

It will be said that the sociologist cannot look upon these and analogous facts — the missionary apostolate, to give one instance — as supernatural facts. This I feel I have the right to challenge. The natural and the supernatural are so intertwined in all social life that in the concrete of history it is hard to discern where one is at work without the intervention of the other. The facts themselves, in their complexity, show the imprint of a higher value as soon as we discern the motives of faith and love that have shaped them.

It will be said that I start from a ready-made thesis and am seeking to introduce an extraneous dogmatic element into sociology, thus falsifying a science grounded on experiment and induction. Here I must be fully understood, to avoid un-

founded charges or worse, confusion of ideas. I am not unaware of the experimental and inductive method, nor do I evade the study of society on the natural plane. In the *Essai de Sociologie*, I faced the problem of society on the twofold plane of its inward formation and its historical development, analyzing the various social forms, primary and secondary, as projections of individual activity in community life, and throwing into relief the concrete syntheses of human relations in their groupings and their dynamism. But although I wished to establish the natural data of society and keep to historical experience, I could not but bring into light what history itself teaches us about Christianity in its special characteristics, not to be confounded with those of any other religion. In doing this I started from no dogmatic preconception, but from historical elements, elements which I interpreted from a strictly sociological viewpoint, as every author has the right to do. My theory of historicist sociology obliged me to study the thesis of supernaturalism in history, given that this is accepted and professed by the Christian peoples, whose number, geographical extent and continuity in time surpass those of any other human experience historically known.

This theoretical premise led me to consider, still from the sociological standpoint, the relations between Church and State in Christian society from its beginnings up to today. The result was a second work, also of a sociologico-historicist character.² Here too the attempt was made to analyze the historical facts and the theories connected with them, their reciprocal influence, the activity of those who believe in the supernatural, those who, while not believing, yet treat it as such, those who, not believing, do not deny that there may be

2. *Church and State*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1939; Longmans Green, New York, 1939.

relationships between creation and God, and finally, those who reject anything supernatural. All this world which history brings back to life, as well as the world in which we are living today, was studied from the angle of the relationships between Church and State; relationships which concern not only the theologian and the jurist but the sociologist too, for they reveal a notable part of the social structure of our civilized world.

How could a sociologist do otherwise? If he is not a believer and starts from another point of view in his study of the forms of religious life, he will assuredly have to lean on some theory to appraise their bearings, if only to justify his method of research. One who denies the supernatural root and branch will place all the data of his experience on the natural plane and will seek to explain in his own fashion how so many millions of human beings and so many thousands of studious men, men of genius and worth, have been able not only to accept the supernatural thesis but to live by it and even to give their lives for it. His will thus be a sociology of the supernatural in the negative sense. Between his and our sociology there will be this difference: he, presupposing as proven the naturalistic thesis, will exclude any theory of the supernatural, while we, interpreting the historical datum in its twofold aspect of natural and supernatural, will accept the existence of the latter and seek to explain it in its effects. But this difference is big with consequences from the scientific standpoint. If sociology studies society in the concrete of existence and in its temporal process, and this is a mixture of natural and supernatural, any naturalistic study is either simply analytical (presupposing the synthesis with the supernatural), or is falsified by the omission of essential data on the social reality.

This consequence will surprise not a few readers, even if they are believers; it will seem hazardous to affirm that for true sociology the sociologist must be a believer. I answer without hesitation: for integral sociology, that is for sociology as the science of the concrete — yes, it is needful to believe in the supernatural. For the other sociology, abstractionist, analytical, morphological, particular, there may be, as there have been, many interesting studies worthy of the name of science, but only as contributions to sociology.

A few examples will make this point of view clear. A student of society before the coming of Christ, if he faced the problem of slavery, would accept the idea that the slaves were an inferior race, without parity of nature with other men, even as philosophers supposed. The principle of human equality escaped them in both the juridical and the sociological field, and even as a moral idea it did not rest on a real and vivifying religious universality. Since the advent of Christianity, any theory that ignores the principle of the equality of human nature rings false and is never accepted in its practical consequences. The humanitarian sociologist, even if an evolutionist or accepting the struggle for life in theory, does not in practice recognize the legitimacy of slavery, which is one aspect of that struggle. The sociologist who sympathizes with the theories of the superior race would have to renounce many generally accepted sociological postulates in order to be able to maintain that other peoples, believed of inferior race, might be reduced to slavery, like the Poles and Czechs under Nazi Germany.

It will be said that sociology notes facts and does not approve or disapprove. That is true, but it cannot avoid noting the historical cases of the degeneration of social institutions when there has been an earlier form of regeneration. It is the

case of the Christian and monogamic family, in the face of the polygamic family of the time before Christianity or of countries not completely civilized. The sociologist, in studying the nature, development and decadence of a natural institution, must arrive at a knowledge of their causes, or better, of the factors that, as it were, go to make them up. When he attains to a complexus of higher social life, he has reached a point from which to survey human institutions and their vicissitudes, and through this very fact he has a wider knowledge and can develop a deeper intuitive sense of truth. A student of social matters coming from a primitive people, who has no knowledge of our civilization save the little he has been able to glean from a missionary or traveler who speaks his language with difficulty, will not be able to grasp the reality of our society and will strive by the aid of certain similarities to reduce it to the level of the tribe in which he lives. We should say that he is mistaken, but that his horizon is bounded and his experience does not allow him to get to know another society, of which he glimpses only certain shadowy and meaningless outlines or else something exceptional that may seem to him wholly unreal.

Why should we wonder, therefore, if a believer is in a position to introduce us to the world of the supernatural, which for a non-believer is unexplored and unexplorable? And, if he is a sociologist and wants to build up an integral sociology, he will try to study the laws of the social structure in the light of the contribution of the supernatural with its transforming influx. This does not mean that his sociology will cease to be a pure and true science; it means only that he will be able to penetrate more deeply into the syntheses of that concrete reality which is the supernatural life in the world.

Sociology has been too much materialized by those who have made it a science of outward relationships or of merely psychological reactions, without including the thoughts and affections of individual men, that is, the original and fundamental centers of social living. These sociologists have lost sight of that process of rationality and liberation towards which social man is impelled in order to break through the bondage of evil, oppression and pain, a process which must be set at the basis of sociological laws. The conflict between the mystical and organizational currents in the course of history has never been sufficiently appreciated, or has been reduced to a fact governed by the deterministic law of social coercion and its contrary reaction. Thus we find many of the sociological laws transported to the supernatural plane, not as an escape from nature, but as the living reality of a society which has lost nothing of its natural character, evolving novelty of action in a higher sphere for sublimer ends. On this plane new syntheses of all human energies are formed. The sociological law of the trend to unification — which in its deeper aspect corresponds to the vital rhythm of the cosmos — has its characteristic and unique realization in the supernatural life, which moves beyond the limits of creation towards the Uncreated.

It is not a case of theology but of true sociology when the supernatural is studied in its sociological values. Theological knowledge will be necessary, just as philosophy is necessary for anyone studying natural society in its reflexes of rationality, or psychology in order to find its psychic reflexes, or biophysics for its vital laws. To interpret society in the light of one of these sciences alone would be to reduce it to philosophy or psychology or biophysics, and thus to fall into the very abstractionism that has been so roundly criticized in these pages. And since the supernatural surpasses and crowns the natural,

yet in the close coexistence of the two, the sociological study of the first presupposes that of the second, only thus is it possible that sociology comes to interpret the synthesis of such coexistence in human society, a synthesis which is, or might be, conclusive.

* * * * *

To prevent misunderstanding, the reader is warned that this Sociology of the Supernatural does not duplicate either the study of the Church as the visible society of the faithful or the study of the mystical body of Christ, but it does take into account the theological and mystical elements of such studies in order to gain a deeper understanding of the supernatural in society. The supernatural is not made a separate section of social life, something juxtaposed to the natural, which individuals may accept or reject at will. In studying society in its complex wholeness, in the concrete, it is found to exist within the atmosphere of the supernatural, and to act and react to it according to the sociological laws which are at its natural basis.

It should be clear from these preliminary outlines that this work has no kinship with certain recent studies on the contribution of Christianity and on the action of the Church in what is known as the "social question." By common acceptance the adjective "social" is taken to indicate economic, juridical and moral work and activity for the welfare of the working and proletarian classes. Sociology does not overlook certain aspects of "social" problems; they are matter for its scientific research insofar as they help to characterize the laws and structure of society.

To indicate more narrowly the type of my work, I used in the *Essai de Sociologie* the term "historicist," explaining in the

Introduction what was meant by this "historicism,"³ and distinguishing it from that which in the philosophical and juridical fields has had a vogue in Germany and Italy. Here there is no need to return to the argument, since the present work, like its predecessors, is imbued with this historicism.

Later, for a better understanding of the terms, use was made of the title "Integral Sociology," to indicate that — the object of sociology being society in the concrete and not in the abstract — the study of sociology must reach its complex reality through all its constituent factors and from every point of view, as a living being that contains its past and presses forward towards its future. *Integralism* in sociology means at once a deeper scientific penetration and a reaction against that *sectionalism* which either stops short at social morphology as conclusive, or, while accepting the historical dimension, reduces everything to a mechanical and psychological determinism.

It will be said that thus we shall have as many sociologies as there are philosophic systems: Hegelian or Bergsonian or Blondelian; or religions which pretend to be supernatural: Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, Hindu; — whereas up to now only the scientific limits of sociology had been fixed.

This too is a mistaken outlook. Just as in philosophy and theology, in law and ethics, there are many systems, so it is in sociology; no science indeed can escape a multiplicity of systems. A sociologist who accepts individual liberty writes differently from one who accepts social determinism; willy-

3. Certain books by the present author — *The International Community and the Right of War* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1929, R. R. Smith, New York, 1929), *Politics and Morality* (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, London, 1938), *Church and State* (already referred to) — have been an application of this type of historicism to sociology.

nilly, they appeal to different philosophical systems. A sociologist who accepts the existence of God writes differently from one who is an atheist; both are concerned with theology without knowing it. A Mohammedan or Hindu sociologist has the experience of his own religion and of the environment in which he lives; hence he will present problems otherwise than a Christian and western sociologist, even if he does not go into religious and supernatural questions.

Sociology cannot draw away its skirts before the complex reality of society and of history, and at the same time claim to be the sole true science of social facts. That is why I ask for an integral sociology, for true experimental science studies its proper material in its full concreteness. The concrete remains at the basis of all my sociological research. I want to give the interpretation that fits it as closely as possible; to scrutinize its inward structure, its laws, its process, its finalism, its fulfilment. It is a lofty ambition; it is also one which I hope will not remain isolated but will find others better able to venture along this new road.

I may be reproached with having left my integralism incomplete, since in my books I have dwelt little on the investigations of the biological or psychological sciences as applied to society, or on ethnographical studies or even on economics. This does not come from any unawareness of the contribution which these branches of study have given and may give. Apart from the special character of my books, I wished above all to bring out the contribution to be made to sociology in other fields, especially that of history, to widen its horizon and to achieve a certain integration insofar as I was able to do so. I wished, moreover, to impel sociology on to the plane of our western civilization, of our own history, and the prevailing

political and religious conceptions. That is why, I believe, the critics who have been concerned with my books have said that my sociological studies were now too historical (as in *Church and State*), now too juridical (as in *International Community*), now wholly political (as *Politics and Morality*), and at the same time works of philosophy. *L'Essai de Sociologie* has been called a philosophy of sociology. In the same way it will very likely be said of the present work that it is wholly theological and Scriptural. The sociological character of the foregoing studies escapes those critics whose ideas on sociology are ready-made, forged by the positivist school and current tradition. It needs an effort to throw off these blinkers and to give to sociology the integral character it requires.

The True Life — Sociology of the Supernatural is divided into two parts. The First Part, *Society in God*, examines and interprets the supernatural life in each one of us and in the social formations, according to revelation and historical and mystical experience. The reader, be he sociologist or no, must not be alarmed if the chapters of this First Part are headed as though it were a spiritual work. I am trying to seize the essence of the Christian life, and therefore must enter a field essentially theological and mystical.

Such studies as those contained in the chapters on "Predestination," "Communion or Mystical Union," have their value in the domain of sociology, for all that passes into the spirit of man either naturally or supernaturally affects his associative life, which, as I have said, is nothing other than the projection and prolongation of individual life.

The Second Part, *From Earth to Heaven*, considers the ethico-historical problem in the reflection of the supernatural, always so as to elucidate the sociological elements inherent in it. The last chapter too, "New Heavens and a New Earth,"

illuminates that road on which mankind is journeying, not blindly or purposelessly, but towards a historical and revealing term.

Need I repeat that I am studying the society of this world as it is in concrete fact? The reader will judge.

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