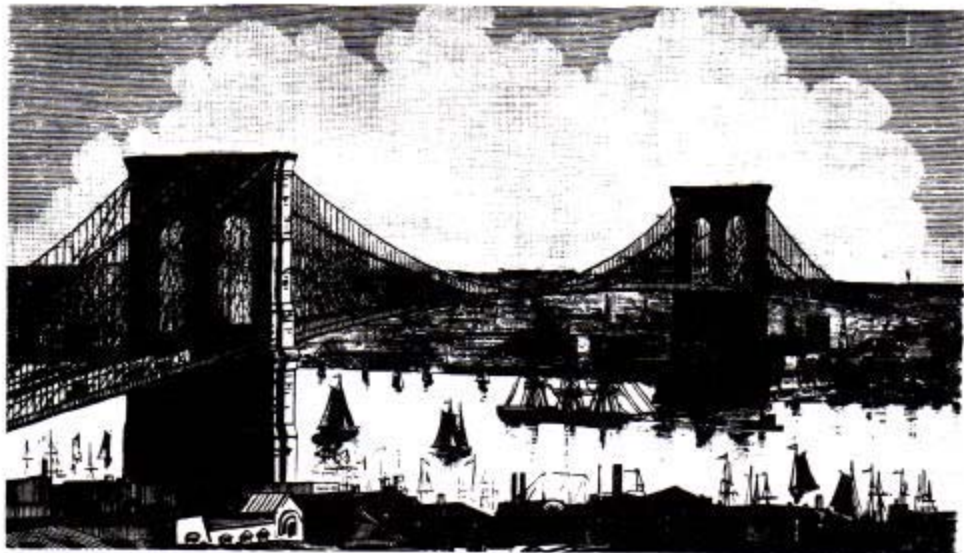


PROFILES: MEN OF SOCIOLOGY



Joel Charles Snell
Kirkwood Community College

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Introduction

Profiles is a little book about major figures in sociology. The reader should find individuals of all varieties who utilized their talents, lives, and efforts for this field of social science.

Hopefully, this is an earthy account of people made famous by time and capabilities.

Though they are different, they share a common concern for the field. Perhaps they will broaden your perspective on life and institutions created by humankind.

Auguste Comte
1798–1857



AUGUSTE COMTE



Auguste Comte

Auguste Comte is the father of Sociology. In this chapter, the author has tried to describe his haphazard life. Comte was responsible not only for naming the field "sociology," but he was able to build a theory incorporating positivism and organicism.

Common, grass-root people buried the father of sociology. Auguste Comte died a bitter and disillusioned man, and one wonders if he truly believed his ideas would someday carry on. He was a scholar without colleagues, rejected by them before his death.

It was a cloudy September day when workers and students, whom he called "disciples," followed after his casket to a small, tree-lined cemetery in France. A few simple words were said as the wind blew in their faces. The men there held back their grief, for Comte had offered them hope of a new world. Some would die after him, re-

questing to be buried near their messianic-like leader. It was a humble ending to a man who, years later, would become famous in many academic disciplines and act as the famed founder of sociology.

At his graveside one might wonder about his life, as he was buried in poverty and rejected by peers who were scholars.

Comte's early life began in a small village called Montpellier. There he lived with his parents, a brother, and a sister. It was not a happy family setting. His mother was dominating and demanding of the boy; his father, 12 years her junior, suffered everyday headaches and bodily complaints due to psychosomatic

tensions.

Comte senior mainly withdrew from life. His world was his garden, and within it things were patterned and orderly. It was a gut feeling that he could see the creation of the traditional seasons through his flowers. Church became his vigil, and he regularly attended mass at the local Roman Catholic Church.

The older Comte was a minor government official. A rightist but not outspoken, Comte knew that times were changing and he despised it. He thought the church was being abused, and people needed their king.

Young Auguste grew up in a time period much like the 1960's in the United States, only more severe. There was struggle in the streets, and most major institutions were questioned. In his early life he saw the remains of the French Revolution as well

as the rule of Napoleon.

Auguste was frail and sickly, consequently, he received a considerable amount of his early education at home. But Comte was bright and, in the proper mood, rebellious. Ultimately, Comte rejected his parents and thought them to be hypocrites, though some of their values crept into his later life. Through these rebellious years as a student, and later a freelance tutor, Comte spent much of his time with the intellectual left. As a political rebel he began living with Caroline Massin. Both were on the "edge of polite society," as Caroline sold her body on the streets. She turned many of her tricks in her local neighborhood and later, with some funds from her hustling, tried to set up a small pornographic bookstore. The story should end with these two struggling together against an unjust society, but it didn't

work out that way. They spent 17 miserable years fighting angrily and struggling to stay out of poverty before she finally left him. After a couple of years into their relationship, his mother forced them to marry in a religious ceremony, though it had little relevance to the couple. Caroline's supreme moment was the strength that she had when he slipped into a mental relapse. The pressure was so great that he was sent to an institution. While there, the doctors' therapy was excruciatingly painful as Comte was cut with sharp razors in order to relieve evil spirits. Scarred and brutalized by the treatment, orderlies would then force him into tubs of ice water. The treatment, of course, did not work, and Caroline soon took him home.

Later, Comte still could not find himself, and his spirits

turned worse. A few days later he jumped into the Seine in an attempt to commit suicide. Authorities were able to rescue him, and he recovered during the following months.

Deserted by his wife and floundering in his middle age, a disciple introduced him to Clothilde de Vaux. She was young, striking, and rich. Her parents were extremely well-off, but they could not buy their daughter a suitable mate. She had married a government official who deserted her as his first interest was gambling, and when the debts became too much, he left Paris.

Auguste and Clothilde adored each other, and it was a stereotypical romantic love affair. Glances were traded, as well as emotionally intense exchanges, but one wonders if they ever really knew each other. Like the romantic novel or movie, she was diagnosed as having a terminal

illness. The relationship was a platonic one; her untimely death only added to her mystique. Comte became a changed man. His last years ended unhappy and unfulfilled. Eventually he died of cancer.

Comte was an intellectual activists, and he fought the system all of his life. At 16 he attended the Ecole Polytechnique. Napoleon had made it over into a military school, but for Comte science and human behavior were of importance. During one academic year, school was closed as French opposition had attacked the city. Comte fought with other students against the enemy in the streets, but when the violence diminished, his zeal increased.

With a heightened consciousness, he, along with other students, fought for new reforms in the school. Comte, joining with

other student leaders, was able to create a class solidarity among the remaining students and temporarily closed down the academy.

Once school opened again, Auguste was removed and later drifted into writing and tutoring students of the ruling class in France. But Comte was never in the academic establishment. Most of his life was spent on the edge, pushed to the position by his peers. His death was not a great loss to the French educational system of the 1800's. Generally, Comte was an "examiner," somewhat similar to the American universities, "teacher assistants." They are the underpaid sweat labor class of academia, and his position was extremely vulnerable and insecure.

On his own, Comte offered private lectures that were attended by some famous intellectu-

als and revolutionaries, and to stay alive, he tutored and wrote tracts for underground newspapers.

As a young man, he became secretary to the poor, but famous socialist, Henry Saint-Simon. Henry was a pragmatic and hard-fought activist, who was a soldier in the American and French revolutions. Though the American colonists were essentially agrarian capitalists, he helped them as a necessary struggle against monarchism. For years the two were a formidable team, but they parted bitter enemies over ideology and political strategy.

Later in Comte's life, one could see him toiling on his Positive Philosophy that would take 12 years to complete. But his intellectual energy was also spent recruiting for the "positivist" movement. Sunday after Sunday, he would preach, per-

suade, and cajole laborers, students, and women to work for a new order managed by his church and a cadre of intellectuals. However, commerce and manufacturing had a prominent place in his movement. He envisioned a world of some capitalism but softened by the virtues of women, the proletariat, and socialism.

Throughout his life, Auguste placed women on a pedestal, which meant that their sphere of influence was indeed restricted. All women had the potential to be like his young lover, Clothilde, but leadership was not their domain.

His life was ended as a prophet of a mystical cult and a universal religion. By this time Comte practiced "cerebral hygiene," which meant that he refused to read the ideas of others. Where his writing had at one time been measured, qualified, and reasoned,

it was now full of passion. His writing now demanded more than ever a new world and a new order.

Comte died just a few years before Americans would fight each other over the issue of slavery and territorial rights during the Lincoln administration. He

now appears to be so much more important in his death. Some of his ideas--more importantly his founding of the discipline of sociology--are rediscovered by each new generation of students in colleges and universities throughout the world.

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Emile Durkheim
1858–1917



EMILE DURKHEIM

Emile Durkheim

Emile Durkheim was an ardent nationalist and French intellectual.

Durkheim was indeed productive. His writing in sociology covers the field including suicide, religion, social disorganization, and social research.

He lost his son in the war and never recovered. Durkheim combined an intellectual life with that of a political activist.

The snow had fallen again, and Emile's mind was on the holiday season. As a Jew, he could have celebrated Hanukkah, but he had given up his faith years ago. The wintry Christmas season, of course, should have been a good time for him, but his family was not together this year. His only son, Andre, was in the Great War. He loved him and wanted him home.

Sitting in front of the fireplace, he received word that Andre was in a Bulgarian hospital. Further, the note said that he had died of wounds in-

flicted in a skirmish. Andre was gone.

As the New Year came, he struggled. His whole life had been busy. Throughout it he had seen real growth in his family, his career, and in his personal stature. Emile said to himself that the living must go on, and he made a tremendous effort to start on a new work. It was a treatise on ethics. But he was exhausted. He felt so old to be in his late 50's, and his wife tried to help him and console his sorrow. Both the years 1916 and 1917 were long and arduous.

Finally, late in the fall of 1917, Emile died. He never recovered from his son's death.

Emile was, by most standards, a success in academia and, in many respects, part of the elite of France. Where Comte was never accepted and Cooley (see p. 29) personally withdrew, Durkheim was well suited to that system.

Born in the small eastern province of Lorraine in France in the late 1850's, Durkheim was the son of a rabbi. In fact, it was a family tradition to continue in this calling, and Durkheim faithfully studied the Old Testament and the Talmud. He was confirmed at the age of 13 in the synagogue, but he finally drifted away from Judaism. For a while he was interested in Catholicism, but for the rest of his life he remained an agnostic.

Durkheim was bright. And as part of the crowning of his ca-

reer, he introduced and legitimated sociology in France. In fact, he was officially the first recognized sociologist as defined by the French government. He held a chair in both sociology and education in which he had a considerable interest.

But, if he was adjusted to the educational system, he was also highly involved in the wider community. He served on numerous committees inside and outside academe. He introduced various sociological concepts, advised federal agencies, and became a propagandist for the government during the war. His job was to keep the morale of the people high when France fought Germany. He produced pamphlets, newspaper columns, and other material to help the war effort. Though he was an ardent nationalist, he was not a rightist.

He was particularly inter-

ested in left of center government favoring the radical Solidaritists (a capitalist group) and other parties favoring market socialism. He personally favored a syndicalist system where representatives of the people were based on occupational groups rather than on land districts.

Emile had married Louise Dreyfus soon after he graduated, and not only did they have Andre but also young Marie. Louise was the traditional French woman who stayed quietly behind the scenes.

Emile, through scholarships, went to the best schools but indeed at times was rebellious. For his behavior, he graduated at the bottom of the list, but his later accomplishments would overshadow this.

He started as a teacher of philosophy in the 1880's in Paris, although he did have a short pe-

riod where he studied under Wundt, who is sometimes called the father of psychology. Soon thereafter, Emile was publishing in well-known journals. And in his late 20's, he became well known.

But his move to Bordeaux appears to be appropriate for him. Here he wrote some of his most important works that students, especially in Western cultures, have come to know. And his endeavors made sociology respectable in his country.

With his success and finally a rank of "professor," he began to edit a sociological journal that, as Coser notes, was extremely well accepted, and many subscribers looked forward to each issue.

Durkheim was above all a good teacher. Where Cooley had problems in front of large groups, Durkheim felt at home. At times,

his lectures would overwhelm them, not only with the knowledge but the excitement that he put into the delivery.

So for Emile, his life was full by contemporary standards. Importantly, he proposed that we are individuals but have group characteristics, and the

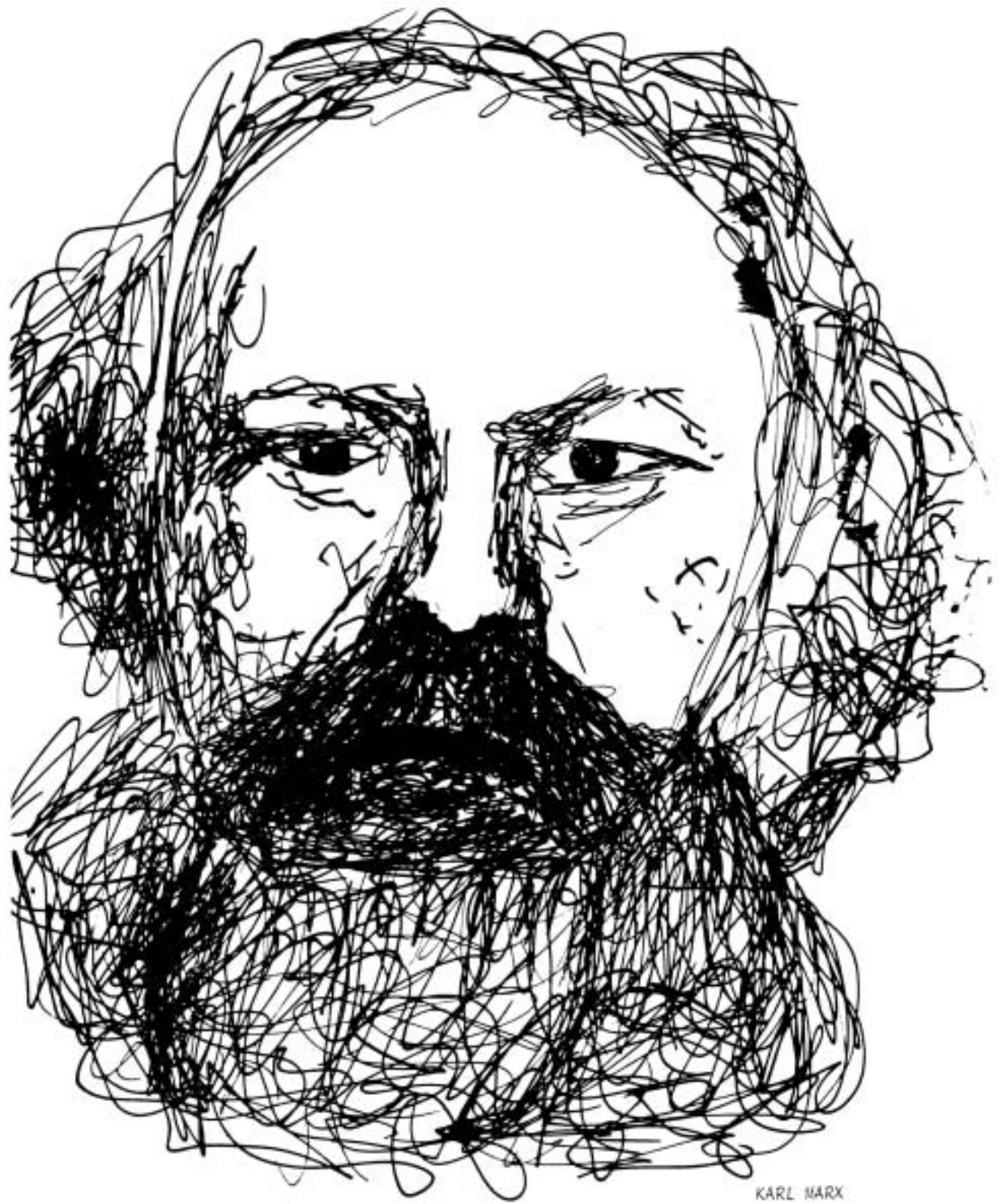
group is larger than the sum of the individuals. His work in suicide, social organization, anomie, religion, and other areas have now become well known to students not only in sociology but in other social sciences.

Durkheim was a man for his time.

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Karl Marx
1818–1883



KARL MARX

Karl Marx

Even in capitalist countries, Marx's influence is powerful. A little over a third of all national governments owe some of their social and economic policy to his intellectual tradition.

Marx spent most of his life in poverty, yet his contributions are indeed immense.

In sociology, Marx's influence is noted especially in the fields of social stratification, social structure, institutions, and political sociology.

Marx held a glass of beer to his mouth. Gently putting it down, he drew a pocketknife from his coat. On the other side of the table was a fellow student from the University of Bonn. Knife in hand, Marx lunged at the other cutting his hand. The student jumped back laughing and in his counterattack drew blood from Marx. Then the game stopped.

Heinrich, getting wind of Karl's barroom dueling, drinking, and fighting, swiftly moved him from Bonn to the more serious and prestigious University of

Berlin. Still, Marx frequented nighteries, was a "player," and became well known as a campus radical. At Berlin, though Professor Hegel was dead, Marx became a "Young Heglian." They were a band of radicals who saw the world in terms of struggle.

Throughout his college career, he spent much of his time in the areas of law and philosophy and, at the very young age of 23, became a PhD. However, his doctoral dissertation only passed after he deleted some radical sections.

Marx, like Durkheim, was a Jew. And, like Emile, he came from a family of rabbis. Further, they both gave up their religion. However, for Marx it was very early, as his father had immersed himself in the Enlightenment era and then left Judaism. So, Marx knew very little about it, and the Marx family was defined by the community as Lutherans. Lutheranism was the state religion, and as Heinrich was a government official, in order to keep his job, he made the change. However, in reality they were neither Jews nor Lutherans.

Henrietta, Marx's mother, was submissive to his father, uneducated, and relatively slow. Karl got much of his informal education, both from his dad and his next door neighbor, a man named von Westphalen. Later, he would become his father-in-

law as Karl married his daughter, Jenny von Westphalen. The von Westphalens were of a higher social class than their next-door neighbors, but they still took an active interest in Karl. Mr. von Westphalen would take long walks with him, and they would discuss both scholarly ideas and current events.

The meeting of Engels was probably one of the most important for Marx. Engel's father owned a large cotton mill, and the son worked there as a clerk. Being in a lower occupation and having a keen interest in the workers, he saw firsthand the squalor and misery they endured. That and other events radicalized him. Eventually, Engels sold his share of the factory and devoted his entire life to writing and editing with Marx.

Soon after college, with degree in hand, Karl could not

find work. Many universities would not hire him because of his radical ideas. Thereafter, he became a journalist with a liberal-leftist paper and was its editor within a year.

However, the Prussian government came down upon him heavily. Reaction had set in, and he moved to Paris, where he where he joined in the revolution of the late 1840's. Eventually he landed in England where he stayed for the rest of his life. Categorically then, one should best describe him as an Englishman.

He spent numerous years working in the British Museum on his major works. Every day for nine to ten hours, he poured over his manuscripts and read with precision government reports and other works that would illuminate and support his own studies.

From this time, Marx stayed

within the confines of his family, friends, and Engels. When he wrote from the perspective of the poor and the lower class he did not do so from the ivory tower. Marx lived in abject poverty, so poor that three of his children died of malnutrition. In the larger world his experience was not uncommon. At best, in most countries, only five to ten percent at the top of the heap really benefited from the system. The history one reads is mostly about them. Many workers could not vote, and they and their children worked in sweatshops, Peasants were thought of as a species other than human. Much of the population was restricted from choosing their government. This, of course, applied both to the United States and to Europe. Women were relatively powerless, and Blacks, Indians, and Chicanos were either legally or socially enslaved. European

immigrants living in America worked under very difficult circumstances in big factories in the major cities.

Later, in his life, Marx became famous among welfare liberals and leftists. Now situated in London and active in the First International, radicals and reformers from all over Europe and the United States came to seek his counsel. Now that he was older, he got a small subsidy from his friend Engels and still a smaller subsidy from the New York Daily Tribune as a correspondent.

The end of his life, then, should prove itself to be a hap-

py one, but it wasn't. For before Marx died, he lost both his wife and another daughter.

At his graveside, there were a handful of friends and some prominent socialists from around the world. However, the general public knew very little about his death.

Marx still had only a glimmer of what would become of his ideas. Within a short 40 or 50 years, most industrial democracies, with the exception of the United States and a few other countries, would have Marxist or Marxist revisionist governments.

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Charles Horton Cooley
1864–1929



CHARLES HORTON COOLEY

Charles Horton Cooley

Overpowered by his father, who was a supreme court justice, Cooley spent much of his life in retreat on the University of Michigan campus. Many contemplative moments were spent in sunny days at his Crystal Lake summer cabin.

Cooley is responsible for significant contributions to the field of symbolic interaction. To Cooley, man was a symbol creature, communicating, gesturing, and reflecting his inner most self to the wider community. Among other concepts, he was responsible for the "looking glass self" and the "primary group."

Crystal Lake, near Frankfurt, Michigan, was the summer home of Charles Horton Cooley. The area was a stable community of some 1500 residents who enjoyed the clear blue lake. On summer evenings, Cooley would spend time walking, observing, and spending happy moments near the woods. He built his own cabin and a couple of others for relatives who lived nearby. Here he could ride horses and spend the sunny days with Elsie and

the kids. Sometimes, when writing one of his major works on the front porch, neighbors and fishermen would stop and chat.

About a day's drive from Ann Arbor, the Crystal Lake cottage was also located near Lake Michigan and Point Beisig Lighthouse. It was surrounded by pines and other foliage that Cooley could easily identify as an amateur botanist. Much of the time, Charles immersed him-

self in his family as he fathered two girls and a boy. Charles would walk with them about the compound, keenly observing their daily interactions which would help him form his own ideas about the "self" and "primary groups."

If his later life was serene, his youth was filled with emotional struggle. Typical of a son or daughter of a famous and dominating parent, Charles could never live up to his father's image. Thomas, well known in legal circles, a college professor, and one-time head of the Interstate Commerce Commission, overpowered his son. Simply, Charles got lost in the presense of an aggressive father and five other children. The fast pace and the bourgeois life-style was too much for the sickly child.

Originally, the Cooleys had migrated from New England, coming from North Europe in the 1640's.

Charles grew up on the edge of the Ann Arbor campus, fostered a career there, and died.

Though for a short while he involved himself in government work, he was foremost a professor of sociology at the University of Michigan. By today's standards of success, Cooley might have perished. He was not a powerful speaker, so the large introductory sections crammed into the arena-like auditoriums would have turned him away. Shy and retiring, key social contacts with corporations, the Pentagon, and other federal agencies, would have bypassed him. Though his works were brilliant, they came to him slowly (3 in 25 years). This would be too slow for most academic deans today.

So how did he survive? First, he was a "Cooley," a powerful name in Michigan. Second, both his wife and himself were second generation kin of profes-

sors, who had taught at the university. Third, when he did publish, his work brought acclaim to both the school and the scholar.

There were other things, of course. His wife, Elsie, was an intellectual powerhouse, who was born too soon for her time. She helped put it together for Charles. Today, she would have gained prominence in her own right.

Charles was really into consciousness. Though he wrote early in his career about transportation, social structure, and human ecology, he later got into the psychic reality of society. Sickly and super shy, burdened by an instrumental, rich, and pushy father, Charles repeatedly asked himself what it was all about. The gruelling, compelling, and anxiety-producing questions each individual asks about himself were magnified many times

over for Cooley.

He wrote one personal journal, published after his death, that revealed much about the inner man. He was quiet and introspective. In an organic sense, to Cooley, thoughts grew and so did the self. He would have probably been at home with the body consciousness movement, eastern philosophy, and transcendental meditation today.

In the 20's, sociology was thought to be radical, but Cooley, coming from a rich conservative family, could introduce the subject to the University of Michigan campus. He had a way of describing new and unacceptable ideas in a very moderate fashion to both students and colleagues. He was a liberal-leftist, who leaned toward economic planning as well as civil liberties, and he was prophetic. A reading of his, Social Organization, though then full of new ideas, now seems com-

monplace because of its applicability.

But, ultimately, Cooley was a teacher, a great teacher. One may want to look up in the dusty archives of any major university an article by one of his students, Read Bain, published in the December, 1930 issue of Social Forces. Bain testifies that if Cooley could not do well in front of 400 undergraduates, on a one-to-one basis and in seminars, he excelled. He really cared about students as people. He was the kind of teacher that you thought about years later.

How you would yearn just to talk to him even if, categorically, teachers didn't mean that much to you. As Coser notes, Cooley was the "sage" of Ann Arbor, and now he has become known to thousands of students worldwide.

Early in March of 1929, Cooley was diagnosed as having cancer. The cabin on the lake was still there that spring, but by summer he was gone. He died just a few months before the powerful economic crash of 1929.

When Cooley died, much of the sociological world mourned.

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Max Weber
1864–1920



MAX WEBER

Max Weber

Many American sociologists are indebted to Max Weber. This account of the man shows that Weber was in constant emotional struggle, but from his internal turmoil came a productive academic life.

Weber is often quoted in reference to sociology of religion, social stratification, bureaucracy, political sociology, and many other areas.

Weber sat looking out the window. He was torn and battered emotionally. The rain began to form a patter but he could not hear the drops in the small mental institution. For him it was utter collapse, and the skies reflected his mood. And of course, the cold water treatment in the sanatorium didn't help much. It seemed that Max was always two men in one - the child of the father, the Max Weber people knew in school and in the military, a strong, heavy-set, beer-guzzling brawler. A Prussian officer; a militarist, and a

manly intellectual, these were all part of the image. For this child in the man, to be practical, ruthless, efficient, and a hard worker, were called up in his mind.

But the child of the mother was just as demanding. Be true to your God, it said, and abstain, believe, trust, and have virtue, sincerity, and piety. All of these feelings clashed with the father in him. Though he always had to grapple with these emotions, he found that when he was busy, terribly busy, the anxiety dissipated. Now it wouldn't go away as he thought that he had killed

his father.

Prospering in a career as a college professor, Max, with his wife, Marrienne, had invited Weber's parents to their home for a short stay. There, one evening, Max senior in his usual fashion was browbeating his wife. Finally, her stoicism broke into tears. Seeing the struggle, Max became furious and screamed. No longer a small child, the burly son frightened and humiliated his father. Max pounded the table, and his face was full of rage. For the old man, accustomed to a diffident son, it was too much. Taken back by the whole thing, the older couple left in haste. This emotional scene was particularly traumatic for a middle-class Victorian family. Only a few outbursts were allowed during an entire lifetime, as in most instances things were best left unsaid.

The elder Weber died within the month, and young Max now believed that he was the cause of the death. Soon after, he was admitted to a mental sanitorium. Besides the cold water treatment, the attending physician also recommended travel, and he and his wife were to go to Corsica, Switzerland, Rome, and eventually to the United States,

On the whole, he liked the United States, not for what it was, but for what it could be. He liked selected portions of the countryside and some neighborhoods. However, he perceived that Europe had better planned cities, mass transit systems, and fewer sweatshops. What really surprised him was the relatively low status of college professors in America. As a guest of the department head of the University of Columbia, he was amazed at the financial difficulties they

had. In Germany, after years of prosperity, a university professor's salary could purchase a large home, the services of a maid, and a life-style to match.

Looking off the Brooklyn Bridge, traveling in the Carolinas, he made mental notes for his future writing.

It really took about five years to get over his mental depression, but one can understand this if you knew about his early life. Max was born in the 1860's to a long line of industrialists, who spent most of their endeavors in linen and textiles. He grew up in the west suburbs of Berlin. The father became a politician of a conservative bent, but his major value system was essentially to remain in office, regardless of the means or the ideology.

Weber's parents, Max and Helene, were not well suited to each other. Where he was efficient, pragmatic, and ruthless,

she was religious, conscientious, and pious. The real rub was that the young Weber strongly identified with both sets of these values. Therefore, he would strongly swing in personality temperament from a beer-guzzling humorist to a righteous intellectual. Resolving this was particularly difficult, and his emotional tirade against his father broke the mental wound open.

Max was a sickly child who read continuously. By the time he was in his teens, he was well versed in the classics as well as contemporary works. But he was rebellious and not liked by his teachers.

He entered Heidelberg to study law. There he joined a dueling fraternity, and a year and a half later, he joined the army. In the service came the complete metamorphosis of the man from the sickly child to the boisterous drinker. Weber had made

his adaptation to the military.

Later, he finished his law degree and his PhD, but in the interim he dated a distant relative for six years. He finally broke off the relationship when it appeared that she would remain in a mental hospital for the rest of her life. Finally, Max married a girl named Marrienne, who was in her 20's.

After the interim of mental depression, Weber grew in stature. Once again organizing learned societies, entertaining famous intellectuals, the remaining portion of his life was relatively successful. An inheritance in the middle of his years was to

ease the household in terms of creature comforts.

Toward the end of his life, Max became increasingly political, leaning toward the Social Democrats and sometimes various nationalists. During the first World War, Weber was recommissioned into the service under the medical corp.

In his last three years, he wrote extensively, and early in June of 1920, he died of pneumonia. The originator of so many studies involving religion, bureaucracy, charismatic leadership, and other areas died with the fevered words, "the truth is truth."

SUGGESTED READINGS:

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- Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (editors), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: The Free Press, 1949), p. 72.
- Friedrich Jonas, *Geschichte der Soziologie* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1969), Vol. 4, p. 43 and passim.
- J. P. Mayer, *Max Weber and German Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), pp. 126-27.
- Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).
- Paul Honigsheim (translator), *On Max Weber* (New York: The Free Press, 1968).