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## Edward A. Ross: Social Development and Social Control

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It can be unequivocally stated that one of sociology's most seminal pioneers is Edward A. Ross. Ross laid the foundation for the study of social control in sociology. In addition to his academic feats, Ross is also known for his political activism for progressivism and, controversially, for eugenics (ASA, 2016, p.1). His ideology aside, this paper will focus on his scientific contributions and leave political commentary on Ross's views for another paper.

As one of the first pursuers of a comprehensive theory of sociology, Ross's research eventually led him to research and rumination on the nature of social control. Ross's erudition upon the transformative application of the individual in relation to society, his view of morality as functionary, and his evaluation of the causes of degrading social orders provide incisive commentary that remains observable and relevant today.

The individual is often the forlorn and forgotten component of the social apparatus in sociology, but Ross provides keen insight on the individual's influence on society (Chriss, 2013, p. 18-19). A concept that Ross grapples with is the Carlylean "gospel of great men," or the theory that individuals possessing disproportionate amounts of power, primarily from their savings of social or political capital, lead the march of humanity within their respective fields (Ross, 1897, p. 247).

Though Ross is not as gung-ho on the magnitude of impact that an individual can make on society at large, he does see veracity in recognizing the sway that charming personality configurations can have on the masses when put in seats of authority (Ross, 1897, p. 241). Vectors of emergent forces of social control from either the lifeworld or The System; like informal, legal, or medical control, are oft legitimated by a clear sanction upon refusal of adherence, such as incarceration for opposing legal control (Ross, 1896, p. 753). Charismatic individuals, however, differ in that they are able to secure fealty and conformity from others in a

kind of social contract where the followers voluntarily subordinate themselves (Ross, 1897, p. 236).

These individuals emerge due to exhibiting certain agentic traits; like the “central positive qualities – courage or veracity in man,” (Ross, 1898, p. 809). Ross’s intrinsic criteria for leadership are smiled upon by personality psychologists today, who claim that the ideal leader is extroverted, conscientious, open, charismatic, and argumentative (Hassan, 2016, p. 164-165). However, it must be noted that well-replicated research in social psychology argues that there is, at best, a weak correlation between particular BFI personality configurations and successful leadership (Aronson, Wilson, Ackert, & Sommers, 2016, p. 289). In light of this research, perhaps Ross put too much emphasis on the individual’s ability to chivvy *via* social control, claiming that it preceded all other forms of social control.

Nonetheless, he demonstrates a degree of prescience into today’s social psychology by realizing that some situations, like a battle in a war, would ratchet up the degree of control that a savant of social dynamics could have on the *hoi polloi* (Ross, 1897, p. 240-241). A contemporary example of Ross’s theory of leadership can be seen in the election of President Donald Trump in America. President Trump not only used his blunt aggression and expressive facial gestures to sway voters, but he also ran in an election where the public had become jaded by politicians and launched aggravated opprobria at the inefficiency of the democratic process (Ross, 1901, 554).

Seeing the interface of individual and environment is the lynchpin for his understanding of relational power between haves and have-nots being a matter that transcends pure economic pedagogy of supply and demand (Ross, 1900, p. 242). Disparities in social and cultural capital, not just economic capital, can cause the feudal arrangements between classes like priests and laity (Ross, 1898, p. 823). These kinds of hierarchical arrangements allow social control to

regulate apparatuses of conformity which allow the “great men” leaders to establish mores and laws that allow for social coordination *vis a vis* the world-view of the ruling elites (Chriss, 2013, p. 22-26).

Ross revolutionized sociology not just through significantly factoring in the sway of individuals, but also through investigating morality. Ross articulates how moral codes are often developed by the aforementioned ruling class, mounted on the notion that “the greater the ascendancy of the few, the more possible is it for social control to affect the course of the social movement (of morality),” (Ross, 1900, p. 244). A society’s spirituality comes from gleaning knowledge, “demands of social control,” and a ruling class wanting to parlay its power (Ross, 1898, p. 823). Clericalism is the radiant point of control most prone to impose morality as a mechanism of social control, and in cases like the colonial Puritans, this zeal can function-creep into other media of control, like legal control in the form of witch hunts (Ross, 1898, p. 818).

Contemporarily, religious morality arguably has its strongest hold once it reaches the degree of fundamentalism, emblemized by acts like Wahhabi suicide-bombings in comportment to the textualized morality in slaying “infidels” (Liu, 2005). However, Ross’s idea of the elite minority imposing an interpretation of morality can be extended to secularized, politicized scruples that are enforced not by the austerity of supernatural sanctions, but through social and legal sanctions (Chriss, 2013, p. 47-49). This phenomenon is evinced through the peddling of politically correct culture and the therapeutic ethos by Progressive jurisprudence, like Canada’s royally assented Bill C-16 instituting speech codes mandating reference to transsexuals as their preferred pronoun, lest the violator be pegged for a hate crime for inducing trauma and brought under the purview of legal control (Tushnet, 2013, p. 128-134).

Ross, like clerics and political thought-leaders, sees morality as a tool primarily meant for the control of a person's mind and "spirit," rather than his body (Ross, 1896, p. 753-754). This issue percolates into the criminal justice system, as Ross's view of punishment is parallel to the Classical School of Criminology's view of punishment needing to serve a deterring purpose and needing to emphasize certainty and celerity over severity (Chriss, 2013, p. 112-114).

Furthermore, emphasis on certainty of punishment, correctional officers sympathizing with the prison experience, and focusing on rehab are all key components of today's correctional system (Clear, Cole, & Reising, 2013, p. 35-40).

If punishment comes off as immoral and draconian, public opinion may view it as simply afflictive damages. This will coagulate into a lack of trust and of faith in legal control, clotting the state's ability to properly control criminal deviance while also leading to escalation in responsive retribution from the citizenry against the criminal justice system (Ross, 1896, p. 754-755). A contemporary example of the aforementioned phenomenon is Black Lives Matter. Frustration from intercity communities at statistical discrimination has bred an increase in hostility toward police officers from minority communities reminiscent of the transitional period of the 1960s between the Early Professionalism Era of Policing into the Community Oriented Era of Policing (Brandl & Stroshine, 2003, p. 184-186). In effect, developing and monopolizing moral codes are suggestion tactics for the empowered to adapt the sensibilities of society and, when implemented correctly, can lead to staggering degrees of order, control, and evolution of civilization, particularly during antebellum (Ross, 1898, p. 825).

Though a firm grasp on the impact of the individual and the polyvalency of morality are reliable mechanisms of social control, people tend to fight against impressment. This reality leads Ross to encourage his readers to avoid disseminating esoteric understandings of social

control, lest reactionary deviance promulgate, naturally progressing to its ultimate destination of anarchy (Ross, 1898, 820). History can be broken down as an oscillation between two states of being: dynamic epochs, when society is able to evolve, and static epochs, when capitalists horde their power of production to the chagrin of the less-fortunate (Ross, 1901, p. 556).

This idea is echoed in Elijah Anderson's current view of status, money, and power being zero-sum resources which are kept from lower-class blacks by middle and upper class whites. As such, intercity communities adhere to a "code of the street" where they discard mores of "polite society" and engage in a counterculture where respect is sacrosanct, violence is self-help, police are seen as complicit to The System that oppresses them, and schools are not seen as a viable conduit of emancipation from ghetto life (Chriss, 2013, p. 150-153).

Numerous routes to such factitious polarization are enumerated throughout his works. Society loses its ability to regulate *via* social control if a "sharp conflict of interest" arises between sects (Ross, 1901, p. 554-555). A modern example of such cleavage can be seen in the National Basketball Association and the National Basketball Players Association being unable to reach a collective bargaining agreement, leading to the 2011-2012 basketball season being postponed while both groups tried to reach a compromise aligned with their expectations (Staudohar, 2013, p. 7-8).

Also, a "great contrast of means" can lead to animosity between tangent groups (Ross, 1901, p. 554-555), like how Jim Crow laws systemically victimized blacks and caused a racial-spatial divide, along with friction between blacks and whites (Chriss, 2013, p. 147-149).

Finally, a "great inequality of opportunity" can be another catalyst of a fracturing of social order (Ross, 1901, p. 555). The famous linguistics study conducted by Doug Massey and Garvey Lundy demonstrated this dissimilarity in housing by revealing that 76% of white middle-

class English-speaking males received access to real estate units, compared to only 44% of black English vernacular-speaking males receiving the same opportunity. It should also be noted that these results do not simply indicate a racial bias, but a class bias as well since the two variables are often collinear (Chriss, 2013, p. 149). Clearly, Ross noticed how disparity of opportunity and of outcome engendered friction between sects, leading to the less-fortunate sects rejected the social system that permits inequality.

Despite over a century passing since the initial publication of his articles, Ross's insight continues to reverberate throughout not only sociology's unfurling melody, but also throughout history's inexorable symphony. Evidence of the persistence of interplay between the individual and society, of morality influencing various types of social control, and of control networks festering amidst class struggles remain at the forefront of international discussion. To better understand the present, it is best to look towards the past. Edward Ross has fathered the collective conscious of social control theorists for generations, and his monumental footprint shall continue to harbor this field.

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