

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To introduce the historical context of sociological theory.
- To study Enlightenment and French Revolution and the influence on sociological theory.
- To understand the Ideal of Saint Simon.
- To introduce August Comte's theory of positivism and law of three stages.
- To understand Herbert Spencer's Organismic Model (Organic analogy) and theory of evolution.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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From the earliest times, thinking about human activity, of theorizing about social life and human community has sought to understand “what” and “why” of human endeavours. From the earliest records of the Assyrians and Egyptians, the Chinese and the Greeks. There has been an effort to understand human actions. Sociology is a science that addresses these ancient concerns of how to explain human relationships in a scientific way.

Thinking and theorizing emerge within a social framework and at a given time. Thoughts come from people, people who live at a particular time, in a particular place and under specific circumstances. Since all social theories were thought by social thinkers. We need to study the intellectual, social and cultural environment within which they did their thinking.

One cannot really establish the exact date when sociological theory began. Developing theories of social life has been going on and is still taking place.

Now theories have been emerging within the social and political contexts of every epoch. This chapter focuses on the early sociological theoretical writings within the context of Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

The early theorists discussed in this chapter are Henri Saint Simon, Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer.

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## 1.2 ENLIGHTENMENT AND FRENCH REVOLUTION

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Presenting a history of Sociological theory is a difficult task as theories are the product of intellectual social and political climate within which they were developed. In this section we will discuss Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

### 1.2.1 The Enlightenment:

It is the view of many observers that the Enlightenment constitutes a critical development especially in the later development of sociology. The Enlightenment was a period of remarkable intellectual development and change in philosophical thought. A number of ideas and beliefs, some of which were related to social life were overthrown and replaced during the Enlightenment. The most prominent thinkers associated with Enlightenment were the French philosophers Charles Montesquieu (1689 – 1755) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778).

The thinkers associated with Enlightenment were influenced by two intellectual currents – seventeenth century philosophy and science. Seventeenth century philosophy was associated with the work of Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. The emphasis was on producing grand and very abstract systems of ideas that made rational sense. The later thinkers associated with Enlightenment made effort to derive their ideas from the real world and to test them. In other words, they tried to combine empirical research with reason. The model for this was science. And we see the emergence of the application of the scientific method to social issues. Moreover, the Enlightenment thinkers wanted their ideas of least in part, to be derived from the real world. They also wanted them to be useful to the social world, especially in the critical analysis.

The Enlightenment was characterized by the belief that people could comprehend and control the universe by means of reason and empirical research. The physical world was dominated by natural laws, and it was likely that the social world was also. Thus, it was up to the philosophers to use reason and research to discover these social facts. Once the philosophers understood how the social world worked, the Enlightenment thinkers could work for the creation of a better and more rational world.

With an emphasis on reason, the Enlightenment philosophers were inclined to reject beliefs in traditional authority. When these thinkers examined traditional values institutions, they often found them to be irrational, that is, contrary to human nature and an obstacle to human growth and development. The mission of the philosophers of Enlightenment was to overcome these irrational systems.

The most extreme form of opposition to Enlightenment ideas was French Catholic counter revolutionary philosophy, represented by the ideas of Louis de Bonald (1753 – 1821). Their reaction was against Enlightenment and the French Revolution. De Bonald was disturbed by the revolutionary changes and wanted a return to the peace and harmony of the Middle Ages. In this view, God was the source of society. Reason which was so important to the Enlightenment philosophers, was seen as inferior to traditional religious beliefs. They believed that since God had created society, man should not try to change the holy creation. De Bonald opposed anything that undermined traditional institutions such as patriarchy, monarchy monogamous family and the Catholic Church.

De Bonald represented an extreme form of conservative reaction. The conservatives turned away from what they considered to be the “naïve” rationalism of the Enlightenment. They regarded “tradition”, “imagination”, “emotionalism” and “religion” as necessary and useful components of social life. They opposed upheaval and sought to relation the existing order. They saw the French Revolution and Industrial Revolution as disruptive forces.

The theorists who were directly and positively influenced by Enlightenment thinking was Karl Marx (though he formed his early theoretical ideas in Germany) and the French classical sociological theorists. The conservatives tended to emphasis social order, an emphasis that became one of the central themes of the work of several sociological theorists. We see, sociology in general and French sociology in particular is mix of Enlightenment and counterEnlightenment (conservative) ideas.

### **French Revolution:**

The causes of French Revolution was the subject of endless debate. The French Revolution plunged Europe into a most profound crisis. From the epicentre in Paris, it sent shock waves into the furthest recesses of the continent.

In 1789 there was reason to believe that the changes taking place affected people beyond France and for beyond mere politics. The revolutionaries had inherited the Enlightenments belief in the universal abstraction of man. They felt they were acting on behalf of people everywhere, pitting themselves against universal tyranny. **Their most noble movement was the declaration of the Rights of Man.**

Beyond everyday politics, there were indications that deep forces invisible on the ordered surface of late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Europe were somehow getting out of control. One source of anxiety was technological, the appearance of power-driven machines with immense destructive as well as constructive potential. The second source was social, a growing awareness of the masses, the realization that the teeming millions excluded from society, might take their fate into their own hands. The third source was intellectual, a rising concern both in literature and in philosophy with the irrational in human conduct.

The French Revolution changed. The structure of society, and created new ideologies to explain its course when nothing could be adopted from the past produced the modern doctrine of nationalism, and spread it directly throughout Western Europe. It had an enormous indirect consequence up to the present. The European wars of 1792 – 1815, sparked off by the French Revolution spread both revolutionary ideas and nationalism. The French Revolution also provided the empirical origin of modern theories of revolution. Interpretations of the French Revolution have enormously varied depending upon the political position and the historical views of the writers.

The relationship between Enlightenment and French Revolution is very complex while Enlightenment spread a skeptical rationalism, it did not propose the extremism or the political solutions adopted during the revolution.

### **Check Your Progress :**

In this section you must become familiar with influence of Enlightenment and the French Revolution on social theorizing.

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### **1.3 IDEALS OF SAINT SIMON:**

Claude Henri Saint Simon (1760 – 1825) was born into an old noble family in 1760. He fought in the American Revolution and wrote to his father that when his ideas were anchored, he would achieve a scientific work useful to humanity. With the outbreak of the French Revolution, he renounced his noble titles. During the Revolutionary period he was chiefly engaged in financial dealings in national lands. He was one of the revolution's great speculators and during this time he lived lavishly. After a major quarrel with his business partner over his extravagance and reckless ventures, he turned to scientific self-education and surrounded himself with scientists and artists. He took a house opposite the Ecole Polytechnique and invited outstanding physicists and mathematicians to dinner. Then he took a house opposite the Ecole de Medicine where he studied physiology in a similar fashion. Journeys to England and Germany completed his education.

The rest of his life was spent in writings amid increasing poverty. From 1803 to 1813 he was concerned primarily with the reconstruction of the intellectual realm, as a precondition for reorganizing society. In 1805 his money ran out. For a time, he was a copyist in a pawn shop. For several years he lived in great poverty and fell dangerously ill. But his fortunes improved with the fall of Napoleon. He acquired a secretary in Augustin Thierry, the future historian, who was succeeded by Auguste Comte in 1817. These young men enabled the ideas of Saint Simon to acquire some coherence.

With the restoration of French monarchy, he turned his attention to the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, to whom he addressed himself in a series of periodicals and pamphlets on the reorganization of society. He wrote on science, economics and politics. The capitalists and liberals, especially the financial aristocracy supported him, as he argued for the primary of industry and government noninterference. However, in the publication of the third volume of the periodical *L'industrie* the constitutional monarchy and the sanctity of property were mildly criticized, his supporters deserted him. Subsequently there was a trial for subversion in which he was acquitted, but this gave him the much-needed publicity.

Saint Simon and Comte continued to publish further periodicals, exploring in detail the features of the emerging industrial society of the future and exhorting the industrial class, and in particular the leaders of the bourgeoisie, to bring it into being and demolish the theological feudal order of the past.

In a sudden crisis of demoralization due to lack of support for his ideas Saint Simon attempted suicide in 1823, but survived for two years. In his last years, he turned his attention to the role of religion in the industrial society and became concerned with the condition of the working class. He also quarreled with Comte. He died in 1825.

Saint Simon maintained that it was possible to study the structure of society and uncover its laws. In his work, Saint Simon wrote about the necessity of creating a science of social organization. The very term organization meant organic structure. He maintained that a society like an organism was born and grew. Therefore, it was necessary to understand such growth (social change) and the forces behind social stability (social order). He believed that laws exist to explain. These issues of organization and social stability.

Saint Simon saw historical development as a result of increasing use of scientific knowledge, each stage of development embodied some degree of rationality. He regarded development and progress as the struggle of opposing forces. When the social system comes into being, it continues till it reaches maturity, then the system begins to decline. The feudal system for example, reached its maturity in the tenth century and from that time till the end of the Revolution showed a decline, leading to the emergence of the new social system. The new organic society would be built exclusively on positive principles.

Saint Simon viewed the historical transformation of European society as the result of forces that were maturing in the womb of the older order. The growth of science and the emergence of an industrial commercial bourgeoisie, the protestant ethic and the critical philosophical movement to the Enlightenment had all contributed to undermine the Catholic Church and the unity of the medieval society. The philosophers with their insistence on the principles of equality and natural rights had led to the destruction of the old society, but the same principles did not give any guidance to the successful reconstructor of the new society. The new social order rests on the unity in the realm of thought of intellectual principles.

According to Saint Simon human knowledge and human society passed through three stages in its development principles from the theological stage of the medieval period to the metaphysical stage of the eighteenth century and finally to the scientific stage. In the modern society, scientific knowledge would replace religious dogmas. Scientists and industrialists would replace clergy and nobility. The new elite will bring about change with the application of scientific principles to all natural and human phenomena. Saint Simon chose to call the scientists, the spiritual elite, and the industrialists the temporal elite“.

Ideologically, Saint Simon envisioned the transformation of society, an international community. Therefore, he was in favour of technological growth and industrialization. He believed that all societies would unite, forming a worldwide community. He felt that the ideas of science should be introduced to the masses through artists and their works.

Saint Simon had great faith in the power of reason to change the world. He viewed the new elements of his age potentially as part of an organic whole.

The most lasting and important influence of Saint Simon lies with his former pupil and one-time personal secretary Auguste Comte. Comte successfully transformed many of Saint Simon's ideal and formulated them into a new discipline called sociology.

### **Check your progress:**

You must familiarize yourself with Henri Saint Simon's writing of an human society and his influence on Auguste Comte.

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## **1.4 AUGUSTE COMTE**

Auguste Comte was a product of Enlightenment carrying on the tradition of the philosophers of progress of the late eighteenth century. Comte was a thinker in the tradition of Bonald and de Maistre, a resolute antagonist of the individualistic approach to human society that had predominated throughout the eighteenth century. Appalled by the breakdown of social order of his days he called for the reconstruction of a moral community. However, later commentators do not see this aspect of Comte work as his link to the tradition of Enlightenment.

Comte lived in the aftermath of the French Revolution. He was distressed and distressed by the disorder of his time and by the material and cultural poverty of the people. His fundamental and lifelong preoccupation was how to replace disorder by order, how to accomplish the total reconstruction of society. He saw the French Revolution as the crucial turning point in the history of human affairs. The old order had gone which was totally



inadequate for the new trends and conditions of scientific knowledge and industrialization. A new polity was necessary for the complex industrial society.

Comte was one of the greatest thinkers of his times. The problems of his times confronted and preoccupied him. The works of Comte was thus a great synthesis in the history of human thought, bringing together contributions in Moral and Political Philosophy, Philosophy of History Epistemology and the history and methods of particular sciences.

Auguste Comte was born on January 19, 1798, in the Southern France city of Montpellier. His father a fervent Catholic and a discreet Royalist was a petty government official who despised the revolution and decried the persecution of Catholicism. In August 1814 Comte entered the Ecole Polytechnique, but in 1816 had to leave the Ecole for his behaviour Comte went home to Montpellier. Later he returned to Paris and supported himself by tutoring. He gave private lessons in Mathematics and the future looked bleak.

In the summer of 1817 Comte was introduced to Henri Saint Simon who was the then director of the periodical "Industry" Saint Simon was creative and fertile and had a lasting influence on Comte's life and works. Saint Simon who was nearly sixty years old was attracted to the brilliant young man who possessed a trained and methodical capacity for work. Comte became his secretary and close collaborator. The two men worked for a while in intimate conjunction. Members of scholars have argued the question who benefited the most from the close collaboration, Comte or Saint Simon. However, it is generally accepted that Comte was influenced in a major way by his patron. The association with Saint Simon may have brought to fruition ideas that had already germinated in Comte's mind. The essays that Comte wrote during the years of close association with Saint Simon between 1819 and 1824 contain the nucleus of all his later major ideas.

In 1824 Comte finally broke with his master. The quarrel had intellectual as well as material causes. Comte had begun to make a name for himself in the world of liberal journalism and among an elite of scientists. He received letters of admiration and encouragement from eminent academicians. However, Comte stood alone a marginal intellectual, he was without position or office or salary.

During the years 1830 – 1842, he wrote his masterwork *Cours de philosophie positive*. He continued to live on the margin of the academic world. In the year 1844, Comte met Clothilde de Vaux, an upper-class woman who had been abandoned by her husband at a young disciple's house. He fell passionately in love with her. Clothilde was stricken by tuberculosis and died a year after the beginning of the affair. Comte devoted the rest of his life to her memory. He wrote his neat book "Systeme de politique positive" which finally appeared between 1851 and 1854. He wrote on the religion of humanity of which Comte proclaimed himself the High Priest. Many followers who were not ready to accept that universal love could solve all the problems of age. Comte travelled and wrote till his illness. He died in 1857.

Comte's work can be seen at least in part, as a reaction against the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. He was greatly disturbed by the anarchy that pervaded society and was critical of those French thinkers who had spawned both the Enlightenment and the Revolution. Comte developed his scientific view, "positivism" or "positive philosophy", to combat what he considered to be the negative and destructive philosophy of the Enlightenment. Comte was in live with, and influenced by, the French counter revolutionary Catholics (especially de Bonald and de Maistre).

Comte developed social physics, or what in 1822 he called Sociology, to combat the negative philosophies and the anarchy which in his view pervaded French society. The use of the term social physics made it clear that Comte sought to model sociology after the "hard sciences". This new science (Sociology) in Comte's view would ultimately become the dominant science. The new science of society (Sociology) was concerned with both social statics (existing social structures) and social dynamics (social change). Both involved the search for laws of social life, Comte felt that social dynamics was more important than social statics. Comte did not urge any revolutionary changes, because he felt the natural evolution of society would take place.

### **Law of Three Stages:**

Comte believed that the individual mind, human activity and society pass through successive stages of historical evolution leading to some final stage of perfection. Being a true science, sociology is in search of laws, social laws to be applied to society such that society's past can be understood and future predicted. Comte considered the law of three stages based on the belief of social evolution to be important societies develops from primitive religion to more advanced philosophical idealism to modern scientific mentalities.

1. **Theological Stage:** This stage is characterized by the fact that feeling and imagination dominate in man's search for the nature, causes and end of things. Explanations take the form of myths concerning spirits and supernatural beings. In this stage, Comte discussed three levels of development.
  - i) **Fetishism:** When everything in nature is thought to have life analogous to our own and becomes sacred.
  - ii) **Polytheism:** When due to imagination of peoples there are innumerable gods and spirits.
  - iii) **Monotheism:** When there is one god, which is due to the awakening of reason which constraint imagination.

In the theological stage, social organization is predominantly of a military nature. It is military power which provides the basis of social stability and conquest was common. Once society experienced the philosophical tendencies leading to monotheism, society moved to the second stage of critical thought which is transitional.



2. **Metaphysical Stage:** In this stage men pursue meaning and explanation of the world in terms of “essences”, “ideals”, “forms”, in short, in conceptions of some “ultimate reality”. The institutional changes correlated with this stage of thought are chiefly. The development of defensive militarism and the extension of established law which lays down a more secure basis for cooperation. This stage is dominated by the military, churchmen and lawyer, a stage in which mind presupposes abstract forces. “It forms a link and is transitional”. The Metaphysical stage started about 1300 AD and was a short period.
3. **The Positive or Scientific Stage:** The dawn of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the positive stage in which “observation predominates over imagination”, and all theoretical concepts become positive. This stage is dominated by industrial administrators and scientists. The nature of human mind has given up the vain search for Absolute notions and origins but seeks to establish scientific principles governing phenomena.

Corresponding to the three stages of mental progress there are three stages of society. The theological and metaphysical stages are dominated by military values; however, the former is characterized by conquest and the latter by Defence. The positive stage heralds the advent of the industrial society. Thus, Comte identified two types of societies, the Theological – Military society, which is dying and the scientific Industrial Society which was emerging. The former is characterized by the predominance of theological thinking and military activity. Priests were endowed with intellectual and spiritual power while the military exercised temporal authority. In the scientific industrial society, priests were replaced by scientists who represent the new moral and intellectual power. With the growth of scientific thinking, the industrialists dominated the major activities of society.

Comte believed that the new scientific industrial society will become the society of all mankind. The positive or scientific stage is the ultimate stage in a series of successive transformations the human race goes through and each stage is superior to the previous one. The new system is built upon the destruction of the old, and with evolution comes progress and the emancipation of the human mind. Thus, Comte’s theory of progress often referred to as the unilinear theory of evolution involved development of the individual mind, the human mind and the human society in an ultimate state of positivism. Comte stated that human history is the history of a simple people because the progress of the human mind gives unity to the entire history of society.

### **Positive Science and Positive Philosophy:**

According to Comte positive science confines itself to seeking the laws of phenomena statements of the ways in which facts are linked. These are:

1. Laws of coexistence – statements about the universally found interdependence of elements which distinctively comprise the phenomena being studied (e.g. planetary systems, biological species, human societies, etc.) and

2. Laws of Succession – statements about concrete historical changes or about facts as they are connected in temporal sequence. Every subject thus has its "statical" and "dynamical" aspect. Both are necessary and closely dependent upon each other.

In stating these laws of positive science Comte was careful to explain the limitations of science. He did not claim positive science as comprehensive or certainty. We now turn to the dimensions of his conception of science in general and the new science of society.

- a) Feeling and imagination in science: Comte stated the importance of feeling and imagination in science. However, feeling and imagination become, necessarily subordinate to observation in positive science.
- b) Role of hypothesis in Science: Comte stated that “every theory must be based upon observed facts; it is equally true that facts cannot be observed without the guidance of some theory.”
- c) Nature and importance of prediction: Comte wrote on the nature of prevision or prediction. He maintained that scientific prevision or prediction is the firmest basis for our actions and policies in dealing with either the material world or institutions of society. “From Science comes prevision: from prevision comes action.”

### **Hierarchy of Sciences:**

Comte maintained that the growth of several established sciences showed that not only human thought in general had passed through the three stages, but also that particular subjects had developed in the same way. Therefore, it was possible to arrange the sciences systematically with:

1. The order of their historical emergence and development,
2. The order of their dependence upon each other.
3. Their decreasing degree of generality and the increasing degree of complexity of their subject matter.

Comte's arrangement of sciences on this basis was: Mathematics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Sociology.

Mathematics was the first science as it was the most general of all sciences, while he regarded sociology as the most complex of all sciences.

Sociology was the new science of society with a distinctive subject matter. The subject matter of sociology was the “social system”. A society was a system of interconnected parts. Individuals could be understood only within the context of societies of which they were members, “Sociology”, wrote Comte “consists in the investigation of the action and reaction of the different parts of the social system...” Sociology, was then, the scientific study of the nature and the different forms of societies, of social system.

Sociology, like the other sciences must use the methods of observation and experiment. Sociology must also use both the comparative method and the historical method because of the peculiar nature of social life.

### **Social Statics and Social Dynamics:**

In the study of social progress and human development, Comte saw two components at work – social statics and social dynamics. Social statics is the study of the conditions of society's existence at any given moment which is analyzed by the means of the "Theory of Social order". Comte stated, "The statical study of Sociology consists in the investigation of the laws of action and reaction of the different parts of the social system – apart for the occasion, from the fundamental movement which is always gradually modifying them."

Social dynamics is the study of continuous movement in social phenomena through time by means of a "Theory of social progress". Throughout his writings, Comte saw dialectical tension in the socio – political activities of his time between order and progress within society. As a true science, sociology must discover those laws making both order and progress possible. In his book positive philosophy volume II, Comte wrote, "The distinction is between two aspects of theory. It corresponds with the double conception of order and progress: for order consists in a permanent harmony among the conditions of social existence and progress consists in social development." By studying order sociologists came to a better understanding of those components necessary to the existence of society, by studying progress, a better understanding of social movement is made. Both are essential.

"Statistics" in sociology consisted of clarifying the interconnections between those social facts which appear to be universally necessary for the existence of a society of any kind the nature of and connections between the family, the division of labour, property, government, religion, morality and so on. "Dynamics" consisted of studying and tracing the interconnections between these many aspects of society as they actually existed and changed in the many types of society in the cumulative processes of history. It was a study of the actual varieties of societies existing in the world. "Statics" is therefore chiefly "analytical", "Dynamics" was chiefly empirical. "Dynamics" applies the analysis of "Statics" to the study of actual societies.

In a conclusion, we see that Comte's efforts were in constructing a positive science of society. His science was meant to resolve the crisis of the modern world, to provide a system of scientific ideas which would help in the reorganization of society and the emergence of social engineers.

For a long time, Comte was ignored as an eccentric with a few good ideas. Today, Comte has become the focus of attention as the study of the history of Sociology has become important. More and more historians of social theory are acknowledging the tremendous impact of his writings upon the masters of Sociological thought. His definitions of the legitimate dominion of the new science (Sociology) are acknowledged. His methodology – observation, comparison, experimentation and historical analysis are the corner stones of sociological method.

Comte must be assessed within the social and historical context within which his thought took place. The influence of his works on later sociologists like Durkheim is evident. While he made some mistakes, Auguste Comte set the stage for the development and emergence of the science of sociology.

### Check your progress:

You must be familiar with Auguste Comte Theory, the laws of three stages and positivism.

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## 1.5 HERBERT SPENCER

Herbert Spencer's work is similar to Auguste Comte's, as he sought to achieve and present a unified scheme of knowledge resting upon a clear philosophical position and embracing all the sciences. His book **first principles** provided the philosophical basis for all his other works. *Principles of Sociology*, *Principles of Ethics* were very voluminous. He published a separate book on **the study of sociology** on many themes – moral and political theory, on education, changing nature of political parties, the purpose of arts, the origin of music, dancing, gymnastics and so on. Some argue that Spencer borrowed from the works of Comte, while others do not accept this argument.

### Organic Analogy and Theory of Evolution:

Spencer elaborated in great detail the organic analogy which is the identification of society with the biological organism. He regarded the similarity between society and biological organism as the first step towards a general theory of evolution.

The organic analogy was reformulated by Spencer as "It is also a character of Social bodies as of living bodies, that while they increase in size they increase in structure. Like a low animal, the embryo of a high one has few distinguishable parts, but while it is acquiring greater mass, its parts multiply and differentiate. It is thus with a society. At first the unlikeness among its groups of units are inconspicuous in number and degree; but as population arguments, divisions and sub-divisions become more numerous and more decided. Further, in the social organism as in the individual organism, differentiation ceases only with the completion of the type which marks maturity and precedes decay. Society is thus viewed as being essentially analogous to an organism, with its interdependent parts or organs making up the body of society. Both society and organism undergo growth. Their parts are interrelated and their functions reciprocal. As they grow in size, they increase in complexity to structure and their parts become more differentiated. Just as a living organism has many units, so also society.

Spencer established the similarities between the biological organism and society, at the same time he also brought out the differences between them. Spencer wrote, “the parts of an animal form a concrete whole, the parts of a society form a whole which is discrete...” in other words, the organism is a concrete integrated whole whereas society is a whole composed of discrete and dispersed elements.

Secondly, “in the (biological organism) consciousness is concentrated in a small part of the aggregate. In the (Social organism) it is diffused throughout the aggregate: all the units possess the capacity for happiness and misery...”

We see that Spencer established the similarities and differences between the organism and society, in his later writings Spencer claimed that “the analogy was used only as a scaffolding to help in building up a coherent body of sociological induction.” The fact is that Spencer used the analogy as a scientific premise to build his theory of evolution.

Spencer argued that the evolution of human societies is similar to other evolutionary phenomena. He established the parallelism between organic and social evolution. All universal phenomena – inorganic, organic, supra-organic were subject to natural law of evolution. Spencer explained, the advance from simple to complex through a process of successive differentiations, is seen alike in the earliest changes of the universe... it is seen in the geologic and climatic evolution of the Earth; it is seen in the unfolding of every single organism on its surface... it is seen in the evolution of Humanity, whether contemplated in the civilized individual or in the aggregate of races, it is seen in the evolution of society... and in all those endless concrete and abstract products of human activity...”

Spencer’s theory of evolution has two different but inter related strains of thought.

1. **The movement from simple societies to various levels of compound societies:** Spencer identified four types of societies in terms of their evolutionary stages – simple, compound, doubly, compound and trebly compound, each being distinguishable on the basis of complexity of their social structures and functions. There is a tendency for the homogeneous to become heterogeneous, and for uniform to become multiform. Simple societies consist of families give rise to compound societies. Compound societies which consists of families unified into clan, give rise to doubly compound societies. The doubly compound societies which consist of clans unified into tribes led to trebly compound societies where tribes are organized into nation states. In this process of evolution there is increased differentiation of social structures into specialized functional systems which leads to better integration and adaptation to environment.
2. **Change from military to industrial society:** This classification system is based on the type of internal regulation within societies. In this system of universal evolution from military to industrial societies, the former is characterized by “compulsory cooperation”,

while the latter is characterized by “voluntary co-operation”. The military society is characterized by a centralized government, a rigid system of stratification, economic autonomy and state domination of all social organizations. The industrial society is characterized by free trade, loss of economic autonomy, independent voluntary organization, a relatively open system of stratification and a decentralized government.

Spencer believed that societies do not develop irreversibly through pre-determined stages but in direct response to their social and natural environment. Spencer was one of the most outspoken advocates of social Darwinism. Spencer’s social Darwinism is centered around two principles.

1. **The principle of the Survival of the Fittest:** Spencer endorsed the conception of a natural process of conflict and survival which operates as a kind of biologically purifying process. Spencer stated that nature is endowed with a tendency to get rid of the unfit and to make room for the better. It is the law of nature that weak should be eliminated for the sake of the strong. The rapid elimination of unfit individuals from society through natural selection would benefit the race biologically and therefore the state should do nothing to relieve the condition of the poor who Spencer felt were less fit.
2. **The Principle of Non-interference:** As a logical corollary of the ideology of Social Darwinism, Spencer advocated individualism and Laissez-faire politics. Spencer opposed any form of state interference with private activity. He believed that the state should have no role in education, health and sanitation, postal services, money and banking, regulation of housing conditions or in the elimination of poverty. Money used for such activities should be spent to support labourers in works such as land drainage, machine buildings etc. Spencer argued that Nature was more intelligent than Man and “once you begin to interfere with the order of nature there is no knowing where the result will end.”

Spencer enjoyed acceptance and recognition during his lifetime. His essays became the topic of discussion among political liberals and Laissez-faire intellectuals. His evolutionary theory provided the answer for the many dilemmas faced by intellectuals at that time.

Spencer’s theory satisfied the quest for an explanation in terms of the new found theory of natural laws of evolution. Spencer’s influence remained strong until about the First World War. After the war his works became less and less important in sociological circles. Among the giants, Spencer influenced Durkheim’s name is prominent.



## Check your progress:

You must be familiar with Spencer's works, his organic analogy and theory of social evolution.

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## 1.6 SUMMARY

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Developing theories of social life has been going on since the earliest times and still continuous. Sociological theorizing was to a great extent influenced by Enlightenment and French Revolution.

Among the earliest social theorists is Henri Saint Simon (1760 – 1825). He maintained that it was possible to study the structure of society and to uncover its laws. He stated, that the historical development of societies was the result of the increasing use of scientific knowledge and each stage of development embodied some degree of rationality. Ideologically, Saint Simon envisioned the transformation of society, an international community. He had great faith in the power of reason to change the world. The most lasting influence of Saint Simon was on a former pupil and collaborator Auguste Comte.

Auguste Comte was one of the greatest thinkers of his times. Comte's close association with Henri Saint Simon helped to formulate ideas in the mind of Comte. He put forth the theory of positivism and the law of three stages. Comte's efforts were in developing a positive science of society. His writings had a tremendous impact on masters of Sociological thought.

Herbert Spencer's work is similar to Auguste Comte. Spencer argued that the evolution of human societies is similar to other evolutionary phenomena. He developed an analogy between the biological organism and society (social organism) and the theory of evolution. Spencer's theory satisfied the quest for an explanation in terms of the new found theories of natural laws of evolution.

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## 1.7 QUESTIONS

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1. Explain the influence of Enlightenment and French Revolution on Sociological Theorizing.
2. Write a brief essay on the writings of Henri Saint Simon and his influence on Auguste Comte.
3. Discuss Auguste Comte's contribution to sociological theory.
4. Elaborate on Herbert Spencer's organic analogy and theory of evolution.

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## 1.8 REFERENCES

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## EMILE DURKHEIM (1858-1917)

### Unit Structure

- 2.0 Objectives:
- 2.1 Intellectual influence and historical background
- 2.2 Theory of Social Facts
- 2.3 Division of labor
  - 2.3.1 Dynamic Density
  - 2.3.2 Repressive and Restitutive Law
  - 2.3.3 Anomic Division of Labor
- 2.4 Theory of Suicide
  - 2.4.1 Egoistic suicide
  - 2.4.2 Altruistic suicide
  - 2.4.3 Anomic Suicide
  - 2.4.4 Fatalistic Suicide
- 2.5 Elementary forms of religious life.
  - 2.5.1 Refutation of existing theories
  - 2.5.2 Sacred and Profane
  - 2.5.3 Totemism
  - 2.5.4 Functions of Religion
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Questions
- 2.8 References

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVE:

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- To understand the significance of Durkheim through his contribution to sociology
- To study social facts in day to day life
- To evaluate various types of suicide in contemporary society
- To analyse various functions and forms of religion by Durkheim to comprehend the significant aspect of religion

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### 2.1: INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCE AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: -

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Durkheim was the 1<sup>st</sup> real practitioner of the new science of society which developed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was also the 1<sup>st</sup> **Prof. of Sociology**. He was born on **15th April 1858 in France** into a Jewish

Family. He was a very intelligent student and received many prizes and scholarships as a young intellectual.

Durkheim is considered to be one of the **founding father** of modern sociological theory. In **1893** he published his French doctoral thesis, **“The division of labor in society”** as well as his Latin thesis on Montesquieu. His major methodological statement **“The Rules of Sociological Method”** appeared in **1895** followed by his most important study was **“Suicide”** which was published in **1897**. By **1896** he had become a full professor at Bordeaux. In **1902** he was summoned to the famous French university. **Sorbonne** and in **1906** he was named professor of the Science of education. Later in his life he become interested in religion and wrote a book called **“Elementary Forms of Religious life”** in **1912**.

The 1<sup>st</sup> world war came as a great tragedy in Durkheim's life in **1915**. His only son was killed in battle and Durkheim never recovered from the lost. He died in less than **2 years** at the age of 59 in **1917**.

**Durkheim’s main contributions to Sociology are: -**

1. Social Fact
2. Division of labor
3. Theory of suicide
4. Elementary Forms of Religious Life

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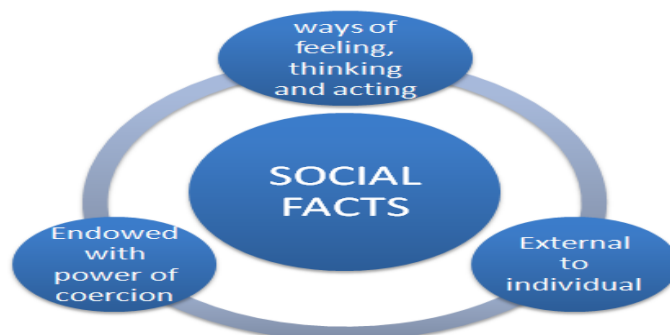
## 2.2 THEORY OF SOCIAL FACT

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Social Facts are one of Emile Durkheim’s most significant contributions to sociology. Social facts are things such as institutions, norms and values which exist external to the individual and constrain the individual.

In his book, "The Rules of Sociological Method," Durkheim outlined social fact, and the book became one of the foundational texts of sociology.

He defined sociology as the study of social facts, which he said were the actions of society. Social facts are the reason why people within a society seem to choose to do the same basic things; e.g., where they live, what they eat, and how they interact. The society they belong to shapes them to do these things, continuing social facts.



Source:

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Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

## Common Social Facts

Durkheim's examples of social facts included social institutions such as kinship and marriage, currency, language, religion, political organization, and all societal institutions we must account for in everyday interactions with other members of our societies. Deviating from the norms of such institutions makes the individual unacceptable or misfit in the group.

## Social Facts and Religion

One of the areas Durkheim explored thoroughly was religion. He looked at the social facts of suicide rates in Protestant and Catholic communities. Catholic communities view suicide as one of the worst sins, and as such, have much lower suicide rates than Protestants. Durkheim believed the difference in suicide rates showed the influence of social facts and culture on actions.

A key idea of Durkheim – that we should never reduce the study of society to the level of the individual, we should remain at the level of social facts and aim to explain social action in relation to social facts.

This is precisely what Durkheim did in his study of suicide by trying to explain variations in the suicide rate through other social facts, such as the divorce rate, the pace of economic growth, the type of religion (all of which he further reduced to two basic variables – social integration and social regulation).

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## 2.3: THEORY OF DIVISION OF LABOR

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Durkheim based his analysis of the Division of Labor in Society on two ideal types of society.

1. The more primitive type, **Mechanical solidarity**, Characterized by with little or no division of Labor.
2. The more modern type, **Organic solidarity** characterized by greater and more refined division of Labor.

**People** in primitive societies tend to occupy very general positions in which they perform a wide variety of task and handle a large number of responsibilities. In other words, a primitive person tends to be jack-of-all trades. In contrast, those who live in modern societies occupy more specialized position. Laundry services, diaper services, home delivery and labor-saving devices (dishwashers, microwave ovens) perform a number of tasks that were formerly the responsibility of the mother-house wife.

The changes in the division of labor have had enormous implications for the structure of society which is reflected in mechanical and organic solidarity. Durkheim was interested in what holds society together. A society characterized by **Mechanical Solidarity** is unified because all people are generalists. The bond among people is that they are all engaged in similar activities and responsibilities.

In contrast, a society characterized by **organic solidarity** is held together by differences among people by the fact that they have different task and responsibilities. Because people in modern society perform a relatively narrow range of task, they need many other people in order to survive. The primitive family headed by father- hunter and mother -food gatherer is practically self-sufficient, but the modern family, in order to make it through the week, needs the grocer, baker, butcher, auto mechanic, teacher, police officer and so forth. Modern society, in Durkheim's view, is thus held together by the specialization of people.

### 2.3.1 Dynamic Density:

Dynamic density refers to the number of people in a society and the amount of interaction that occurs among them. An increase in number of people and an increase in interaction among them lead to the change from mechanical to organic solidarity because together they bring more competition for scarce resources. The rise of division of labor allows people to complement, rather than conflict with one another, and in turn makes peaceful coexistence possible.

### 2.3.2 Repressive and Restitutive Law:

Durkheim argued that a society with mechanical solidarity is characterized by **repressive law**. Because people are very similar in this type of society, an offence is likely to be severely punished for any action that is considered an offence against the collective moral system. The thief of a pig must lead to the cutting off of the offender's hand, blaspheming against God or God's might well result in removal of one's tongue.

A society with organic solidarity is characterized by **restitutive law** instead of being severely punished, individual in modern society are simply to be asked to comply with law or to repay make restitution to those who have been harmed by their action.

The monitoring of repressive law is in the hands of the masses in society with M.S. but the maintenance of restitutive law is primarily the responsibility of specialized agencies (e.g. police, Court).

### 2.3.3: Anomic Division of Labor

The central 'pathology' in modern society, in Durkheim's view is '**Anomic Division of Labor**'. By thinking of anomic as pathology Durkheim manifested his belief that the problems of the modern world can be 'cured'.



## Durkheim and Division of Labor

<u>Traditional Society</u>	<u>Modern Society</u>
<b>Mechanical solidarity</b> = a form of social interdependence based on commonly shared beliefs and strong group identity. Based on very simple <b>division of labor</b> .	<b>Organic solidarity</b> = form of social interdependence based on differentiated/specialized <b>division of labor</b> .
Similar to simple organism or machine: individuals are mostly functionally equivalent and substitutable.	Similar to a complex organisms; its organs are not interchangeable.
'Society is in the individual'	'The Individual is in Society'




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### 2.4 THEORY OF SUICIDE

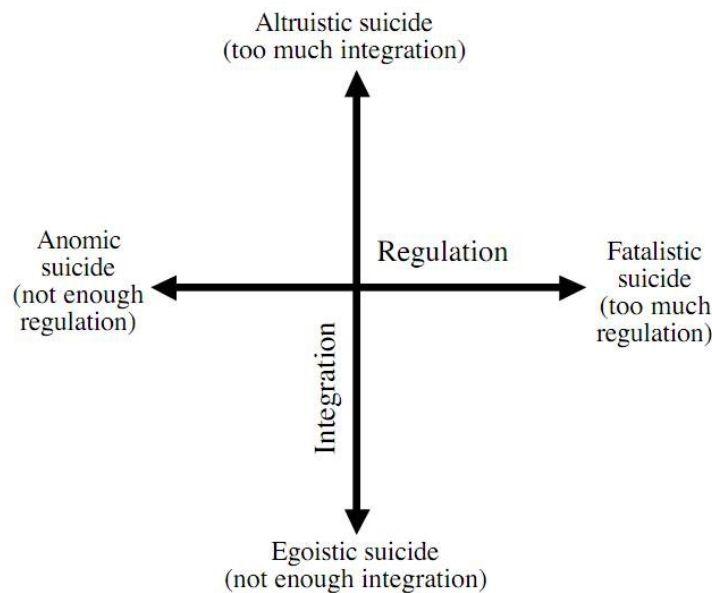
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Durkheim's theory of suicide is the paradigmatic example of how theory and research should be connected. Durkheim chose to study suicide because it is relatively concrete and specific phenomena for which there were comparatively good data was available. His most important reason to study suicide was to prove the power of new science of sociology. As a Biologist, Durkheim was not concerned with the reasons for an individual committing suicide. Instead he was interested in explaining difference in suicide rates i.e. he was interested in why one group had a higher rate of suicide than did other.

Durkheim began suicide by testing and rejecting the ideas about the causes of suicide such as- individual psychopathology, alcoholism, race, heredity, and climate. He also rejected the imitation theory which argues that people commit suicide because they are imitating the actions of others. Durkheim's theory of suicide, and the structure of sociological reasoning, can be clearly seen through his four types of suicide:

- 1) **Egoistic**
- 2) **Altruistic**
- 3) **Anomic**
- 4) **Fatalistic**

Durkheim linked each of the type of suicide to the degree of integration into, or regulation by society. Integration refers to the degree to which collective sentiments are shared. Regulation refers to the degree of external constrain on people. '**Whitney pope**' offered a very useful summary of the four types of suicide discussed by Durkheim.



#### 2.4.1 Egoistic suicide:

High rates of suicide egoistic suicide are likely to be found in societies, or groups in which the individual is not well integrated into the large social unit. This lack of integration leads to a feeling that the individual is not part of society, but this also means that society is not part of the individual. Durkheim believed that the best parts of a human being—our mortality, values, and sense of purpose—come from society. An integrated society provides us with these things, as well as a general feeling of moral support to get us through the daily small indignities and trivial disappointments. Without this, we are liable to commit suicide at the smallest frustration.

Durkheim decided different degree of integration of individual into religion, family, political and national communities. He found that wherever individuals didn't have a strong sense of belonging there was a high rate of suicide in that society. For e.g. people belonging to catholic religion have less suicide than people belonging to Protestant religion. This is because while both religions prohibit suicide, Catholic religion is able to integrate its members more fully into its community.

Durkheim further states that family like religious group is a powerful safeguard against suicide. Non-marriages increase the rate of suicide; large families are more integrated than small families and thus have lesser rate of suicide. Great social disturbance brings people together and encourages nationalism and patriotism. Therefore, at such time the individual is powerfully integrated into his community thus reducing the rate of suicide.

#### 2.4.2 Altruistic suicide:

The second type of suicide discussed by Durkheim is altruistic suicide. Whereas egoistic is more likely to occur when social integration is too weak. Altruistic suicide is more likely to occur when "social integration is too strong". The individual is literally forced into committing suicide. This kind

of suicide is caused because of “**over integration**” of the individual into his social group. Those who commit Altruistic suicide do so because they feel that it is their duty to do so. In some societies individual’s life is governed by custom and habits. The individual is dominated by the community. In such a society the individual may take his own life because of customs. For e.g. women committing sati in India, The Japanese commit “Hara-kiri”. i.e., take their life instead of surrendering to the enemies.

One notorious example of Altruistic suicide was the mass suicide of the followers of the Reverend Jim Jones in Jonestown, Guyana, in 1978. They knowingly took a poisoned drink and, in some cases, had their children drink it as well. They clearly were committing suicide because they were so tightly integrated into the society of Jones fanatical followers. Durkheim notes that this is also the explanation for those who seek to be martyrs, as in the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. More generally, those who commit Altruistic suicide do so because they feel that it is their duty to do so.

Higher rates of egoistic suicide stem from “incurable weariness and sad depression”. The increased likelihood of Altruistic suicide “springs from hope, for it depends on the belief in beautiful perspectives beyond this life”. When integration is low, people will commit suicide because they have no greater good to sustain them. When integration is high, they commit suicide in the name of that greater good.

### **2.4.3 Anomic Suicide:**

The third major type of suicide discussed by Durkheim is Anomic suicide. It is more likely to occur when the regulative powers of society are disrupted. Such disruptions are likely to leave individuals dissatisfied because there is little control over their passions, which are free to run wild in an insatiable race for gratifications. Rates of Anomic suicide are likely to rise whether the nature of the disruption is positive (for example, an economic boom) or negative (an economic depression).

Such changes put people in new situations in which the old norms no longer apply but new ones have yet to develop. Periods of disruptions unleash currents of anomie-moods of footlessness and formless news stand these currents lead to an increase in rates of anomic suicide. This is relatively easy to envisage in the case of an economic depression. The closing of a factory because of a depression may lead to the loss of a job. Being cut off from these structures or others (for example, family, religion and state) can leave an individual highly vulnerable to the effects of currents of anomie. More difficult is to imagine the effect of an economic boom. In this case, Durkheim argued that sudden success leads individuals away from the traditional structures in which they are embodied. They may lead individuals to quit their jobs, move to a new community, and perhaps even find a new spouse. All these changes disrupt the regulative effect of the extant structures and leave the individual in boom periods vulnerable to anomic social currents. In such a condition, people’s activity is released from regulation and even their dreams are no longer restrained. People in an economic boom seem to have limitless prospects, and “reality seems valueless by comparison with the dreams of levered imaginations”.

This kind of suicide is caused by normlessness or deregulation in society. Rate of Anomic suicide are likely to rise when the nature of the disruption is incapable of exercising its authority over individuals. Period of disruption leads to an increase in rates of anomic suicide.

#### **2.4.4 Fatalistic Suicide:**

There is a fourth little type of suicide fatalistic suicide. Fatalistic suicide is more likely to occur when regulation is excessive. Durkheim described those who are more likely to commit fatalistic suicide as “persons with future pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline”. The classic example is the slave who takes his life because of the hopelessness associated with the oppressive regulation of his every action. Too much regulation- oppression causes a rise in the rate of fatalistic suicide.

#### **Conclusion:**

Durkheim concludes his study of suicide with an examination of what reforms could be undertaken to prevent it. Most attempts to prevent suicide have failed because it has been seen as an individual problem. For Durkheim, attempts to directly convince individuals not to commit suicide are futile, since its real cause is in society.

Durkheim admits that some suicide is normal, but he argues that modern society has seen a pathological increase in both egoistic and Anomic suicides. Here his position can be traced back to the division of labor, where he argued that the anomic of modern culture is due to the abnormal way in which labor is divided so that it leads to isolation rather than interdependence.

In order to preserve the benefits of modernity without increasing suicides is balancing these social currents. In our society, Durkheim believes, these currents are out of balance. If social regulation and integration are too low, leading to an abnormal rate of anomic and egoistic suicides.

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## **2.5 ELEMENTARY FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE - THEORY OF RELIGION**

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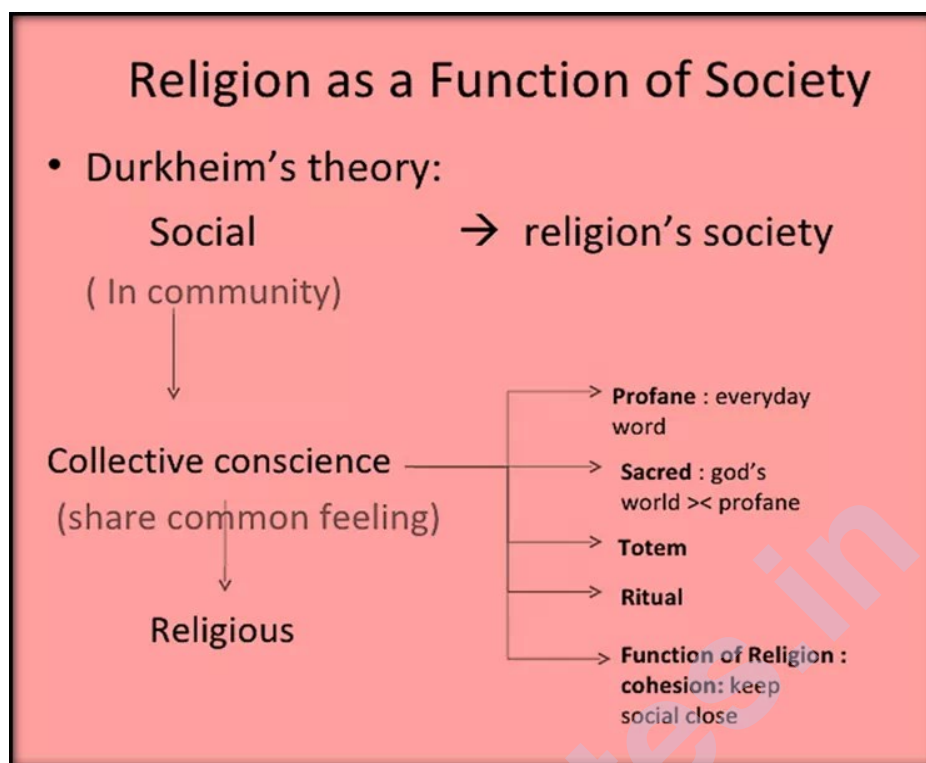
Durkheim's last major book was called the “**Elementary Forms of Religious Life**”. This book contains a description and detailed analysis of “**Clan System**” and of “**Totemism**” in the **Arunta Tribes** of Australia. This book puts forward a general theory of religion. The central theme of Durkheim's theory of religion is that throughout history man has always worshiped the collective social reality supported by faith.

#### **Definition: -**

Durkheim defined religion as “**a unified system of belief and practices related to sacred things**, to say things set apart and forbidden belief and practices which unites in the simple community called church. Religion binds people in to moral community called church, and all those who adhere to its beliefs and practices unite people in a social community by relating

them to sacred things". Thus, collection of beliefs, rituals etc. is essential for development of religion.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)



Source:

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### 2.5.1: Refutation of existing theories

Durkheim was very much interested in religion and to find out its nature, origin and its function. He rejected the theories of animism and naturism because he felt they were not sufficient enough to explain the difference between sacred and profane and it took man away from the real world. According to Durkheim, group life is the main source or cause of religion. He was interested in the most elementary and primitive forms of religion found among the Arunta Tribes of Australia. Durkheim refused to believe that all religion is nothing but illusion.

### 2.5.2: Sacred or profane

According to Durkheim, the essence of religion is division of the world into two kinds of phenomena, the **Sacred** and **Profane**. The **Sacred** refers to anything that is socially defined as requiring special religious treatment, rituals and deities. Participation in the sacred order such as in rituals or

ceremonies gives us special prestige. The **Profane** is the opposite of **Sacred**.

### 2.5.3: Totemism

Durkheim has taken Totemism among the Australian tribes as the key concept to explain the origin of religion. Ordinary objects like pieces of wood, stone, plants, animals are transformed into sacred object, once they become the totem. Totem refers to a belief in a mysterious and sacred relationship between the totemic object and the group of people. According to Durkheim basic principle of Totemism is the worship of an impersonal and unknown force which is found everywhere and controls everything.

### 2.5.4: Functions of Religion

1. **Disciplinary Function:** - Religion provides a certain code of conduct for its believers. It prepares man for social life by imposing a certain amount of self-discipline and self-control. This helps individual to follow social norms and maintain social control.
2. **Cohesive Function:** -Religion binds people together i.e. bring people together and assures them of a sense of belonging. Religions also make the common bonds of people stronger and provide social solidarity.
3. **Vitalizing Function:** - The practice of religious rituals maintains and vitalizes the social tradition of the group. Religion and its practices have different ceremonies and ritual. Participation in these ceremonies brings people together. It also helps to transmit the values and tradition to future generation. In this way religion keeps alive the customs and traditions of society.
4. **Euphoric Function:** -Religion provides extreme happiness and joy to its believers; it gives individual a sense of security and comfort in time of stress and disaster. It also builds up the confidences of individual when they suffer personal grief and sorrows.

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## 2.6 SUMMARY:

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Durkheim's work has a profound influence in sociology as is evident from the general nature of theoretical advances made along his propositions, particularly the functional approach. Similarly, his specific empirical studies such as suicide and religion generated a great deal of interest among sociologists to carry out further empirical investigations in these and related areas, employing the same methodology.

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## 2.7 QUESTIONS

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1. Explains Durkheim's theory of Suicide
2. Explain Division of Labour



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## 2.8 REFERENCES

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## MAX WEBER

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Brief Sketch of Max Weber (1864-1920)
- 3.4 Methodology
- 3.5 Ideal Types
- 3.6 Rationalization
- 3.7 Bureaucracy
- 3.8 Social Action
- 3.9 Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
- 3.10 Summary
- 3.11 Questions
- 3.12 References

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### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

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- To comprehend Weber's methodology and the significance of Verstehen and ideal types.
- Understanding Weber's explanation of various social actions and his perspective on religion.

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### 3.2 INTRODUCTION

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Max Weber (1864-1920) was interested in economics, music, law, philosophy, and history in addition to sociology. Weber, like the sociologists of his time, sought to comprehend the nature and causes of social change. Much of his work focused on the evolution of modern capitalism and the ways in which modern society differed from earlier forms of social organisation. Through a series of empirical studies, Weber identified key sociological debates that remain central to sociologists today and outlined some of the fundamental characteristics of modern industrial societies. According to Weber, economic factors are significant, but ideas and values have an equal impact on social change.

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### 3.3 BRIEF SKETCH OF MAX WEBER (1864-1920)

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Max Weber was born into a middle-class family in Erfurt, Germany in 1864. The profound differences in his parents' worldview had a profound effect

on his intellectual and psychological development. His father held an important political position as a bureaucrat. He stood in stark contrast to his wife, who was a devout Calvinist and led an ascetic existence devoid of the worldly pleasures he craved.

Max Weber left home briefly at age 18 to attend the University of Heidelberg. Weber spent three semesters at Heidelberg University studying law, history, philosophy, and economics before serving a year in the military. When he resumed his education in 1884, he attended the University of Berlin and Göttingen for one semester. In 1889, he earned his Ph.D., became a lawyer, and began teaching at the University of Berlin.

A tension existed in Weber's life and, more importantly, in his work between his father's bureaucratic mind and his mother's religiosity. This unresolved tension permeates both Weber's professional and personal life.

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### 3.4 METHODOLOGY

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Prior to his contribution to sociology, Weber was exposed to the methodological traditions of Kant, Hegel, Comte, Saint Simon, Durkheim, and Marx. The idealist and rational method developed by Kant and Hegel emphasised the distinction between the statement of value, which describes what ought to be, and the statement of fact, which describes what is. Human thought facilitates the contrast between the two. Comte's positivist method argued that understanding of reality is possible through empirical or positivist means. Positivism holds that science should only be concerned with observable, directly experienced entities. One can infer laws that explain the relationship between observed phenomena based on careful observation. The positivist philosophy applies the methodology of natural science to sociology. Weber was neither convinced by the rational nor the empirical approach to the study of reality, but he did believe that behind every reality are causalities of values, actions, and motivations.

Weber emphasised the importance of substantive work, stating that "only by exposing and solving substantial problems can science be established and its methods be developed." Alternatively, purely epistemological and methodological reflections have never played a pivotal role in such developments".

The debates in Germany between positivists who believed that history consisted of general laws and subjectivists who reduced history to idiosyncratic actions shaped Weber's sociological perspective. The positivists believed that history could be comparable to a natural science, whereas the subjectivists considered the two to be radically distinct.

Weber established the connection between sociology and history. He explained the distinction between the two disciplines by stating that sociology seeks to formulate type concepts and generalised uniforms of empirical processes, whereas history focuses on the causal explanation of individuals' actions, structures, and personalities with cultural significance. History, according to Weber, consists of singular empirical events; there are

no empirical generalisations. Sociologists must therefore distinguish between the empirical world and the conceptual universe they create. The concepts never fully capture the empirical world, but they can be utilised as heuristic tools to gain a deeper comprehension of reality. Sociologists can develop generalisations using these concepts, but these generalisations are not historical and should not be confused with empirical.

In his study, Weber combined the two. So that he could conduct a causal analysis of historical occurrences, he oriented his sociology toward the development of clear concepts. Weber believed that history consists of an infinite number of distinct phenomena. To investigate these phenomena, it was necessary to create a variety of concepts designed for real-world research. As a general rule, although Weber and the majority of sociologists and historians did not strictly adhere to it, the task of sociology was to develop these concepts, which history would use to conduct causal analyses of particular historical phenomena. In this way, Weber sought to develop a science that reflected the complexity of social life by combining the specific and the general.

Weber, along with the philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) and Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936), believed that it was difficult to accurately predict behaviour using natural science methods. The importance of the influence of culture on human behaviour stems from the fact that human behaviour cannot be comprehended without an understanding of the meaning individuals attribute to their actions.

Weber was one of the first sociologists to conceptualise sociology as a descriptive and interpretive field of study. Weber defined sociology as "the science concerned with the interpretive comprehension and, consequently, the causal explanation of its course and effects." Thus, according to Weber, sociology should be a science, it should be concerned with causality (combining sociology and history), and it should employ interpretative understanding, or *Verstehen*.

### **Verstehen:**

Weber and Dilthey defined *Verstehen* as the use of empathy, or putting oneself in the shoes of another, to understand the motivations and logic of another's action. Weber defines *verstehen* as comprehending or comprehending on the level of meaning. This ability to comprehend social phenomena distinguishes social sciences from natural sciences, which only observe uniformities and draw broad conclusions about the relationship between atoms or chemical compounds. *Verstehen* facilitates the scientific study of social behaviour in two ways: direct observational understanding of the subjective meaning of human actions and understanding of the underlying motive.

Sociology necessitates an understanding of the attributed meaning or reason that involves the action of agents, i.e., people who attribute a sense, a reason, or a causal factor to what they do.

Weber's understanding of Verstehen was derived from hermeneutics, which is a special approach to the understanding and interpretation of published writings in order to understand the author's thinking as well as the basic structure of the text. Weber attempted to understand actors, interactions, and human history by employing hermeneutic tools. Verstehen was a rational method of investigation—a tool for macro level analysis—rather than intuition, sympathetic participation, or empathy.

Weber distinguished two kinds of Verstehen: direct observational comprehension and explanatory comprehension. Observational direct the obvious subjective meaning of an individual's behaviour is verstehen, and the social scientist attributes meaning to what he observes. It enables us to recognise actions for what they are. It is the use of outward behaviour and facial expressions to comprehend what is happening. When we have explanatory understanding, we know why someone does something. Here, action is placed in the context of motivation and why it occurs. To accomplish this, one must put oneself in the shoes of those participating in the activity.

Chopping wood, for example, is direct observational understanding; chopping wood for money or firewood is explanatory understanding.

A sociologist cannot comprehend the significance of an individual's behaviour to that individual. However, if the behaviour is consistent across multiple individuals in a given situation, the sociologist can formulate generalisations that can serve as the foundation for causal linkages. Since the sociologist is confronted with a variety of causes influencing social or historical events, the sociologist must determine whether the event would have been different if a specific cause had been removed, and if so, whether the cause had a decisive effect. Weber defines causality as the likelihood that one event will be followed or accompanied by another. Because we can have a special understanding of social life (Verstehen), Weber believes that causal knowledge in the social sciences differs from causal knowledge in the natural sciences.

According to Rossides (1978), for Weber Verstehen, sociology was a search for insights and solutions to the unique and changing problems that humans face, rather than a search for the underlying principle of existence.

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### 3.5 IDEAL TYPES

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The ideal type evolved from Weber's theories of Verstehen and causal explanation. When Weber combined his concept of comprehension with ideal types, sociology took a step toward scientific sophistication and socio-political utility. According to Collins and Makowsky, "under Weber's analysis, social realities must be comprehended (Verstehen) by imagining oneself in the experience of men and women as they act out their own worlds; ideal types are the tools for making scientific generalisations from our comprehension of this infinitely complex and ever-changing world."

For Weber, sociology must develop ideal types to significantly contribute to the explanation of social and cultural events' causes. Ideal type is a generalisation of the essential, albeit exaggerated, characteristics of any social phenomenon. Then, these "ideal types" can be contrasted with actual, empirical forms found in the real world.

Rossides (1978) states, "An ideal type is an analytical construct that serves as a measuring stick for identifying similarities and differences in concrete cases." It is a mental creation. An ideal type is, at its most fundamental level, a concept constructed by a social scientist based on his or her interests and theoretical orientation to capture the essential elements of a social phenomenon.

They are heuristic devices that are useful for conducting empirical research and comprehending particular facets of the social world.

In Weber's words, the function of ideal types is "the comparison with empirical reality in order to establish its differences or similarities, to describe them with the most unambiguously intelligible concepts, and to comprehend and explain them causally."

Weber created three types of ideal types according to their level of abstraction.

- a) ideal types of historical particulars that refer to specific historical realities, such as the western city, the Protestant ethic, and contemporary capitalism.
- b) ideal types, which refer to abstract elements of historical reality observable in various historical and cultural contexts, such as bureaucracy or feudalism.
- c) ideal types that constitute rational reconstructions of a specific type of behaviour, such as economic theory propositions.

Weber believed that the ideal type should be inductively derived from the actual world of social history. Researchers were required to immerse themselves in historical reality before deriving ideal types from that reality. Although ideal types are to be derived from the real world, they are not to be mirror images of the world; rather, they are to be one-sided exaggerations of the real world. On the level of significance, the ideal type is evaluated based on its typicality and suitability. The more extreme the ideal type, according to Weber, the more useful it is for historical research.

An ideal type is not ideal in the sense of a standard of perfection or a final objective. Ideal types do not encapsulate essences or the truth; rather, ideal types are constructed by sociologists and, as a result, are constructed from particular perspectives.

Applied primarily to various types of rational behaviour, ideal type is fundamentally "a model of what an agent would do if he acted completely rationally in accordance with the criteria for rationality in his behaviours sense." The ideal types provide the language and procedure for analysing



specific behaviour and aid in the development of theoretical explanations for instances of behaviour that deviate from "ideal typical norms" (Abraham and Morgan 1989)

### Check your Progress

Explain the meaning of Verstehen.

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The definition of ideal types

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### 3.6 RATIONALIZATION

In contemporary society, rationalisation is a process that is characterised by effectiveness, predictability, calculability, and dehumanisation. Not only has rationalisation changed contemporary society, it also significantly influenced the rise of capitalism. A rational society is based on rational forms of organisation, technology, and efficiency, with religion, morality, and tradition being supplanted by them.

A rational society is one where efficiency, technology, and organisation are prioritised over morality, religion, or tradition.

The most fateful force in our modern life, according to him, is rational capital, according to his essay The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

It is challenging to identify a single definition of rationalisation because Weber used a variety of definitions of the term and frequently omitted to mention which definition, he was referring to in a given discussion. When it came to social structures or institutions, Weber's descriptions of the rationalisation process in one were typically very different from those in another. The rationalisation process, in the words of Weber, takes on "unusually varied forms," and the history of rationalism "shows a development which by no means follows parallel lines in the various departments of life."

In Weber's writings, four fundamental types of rationality are identified by Kalberg.

1. Kalberg defines practical rationality as "every way of life that views and evaluates worldly activity in relation to the individual's purely pragmatic and egoistic interests." Realities are accepted as such by those who adhere to practical reason, who then determine the fastest solutions to the problems they present. This kind of rationality opposes anything that might threaten to go beyond the ordinary. All impractical religious or secular utopian values are distrusted by them.
2. Theoretical rationality: Theoretical or intellectual rationality includes logical deduction, induction, attribution of causality, and similar abstract cognitive processes. The actor transcends everyday realities in an effort to comprehend the world as a meaningful cosmos, in contrast to practical rationality.
3. Substantive rationality: (similar to pragmatic rationality but distinct from theoretical rationality) directly arranges actions into patterns using value clusters. A system of values must be taken into account when choosing the means to an end in substantive rationality. There is no more (substantially) rational value system than any other. According to Weber, the only type of rationality that has the "potential to introduce methodical ways of life" (Kalberg, 1980). As a result, in the West, a specific substantive rationality—Calvinism—that placed a strong emphasis on a methodical way of life led to the subjugation of practical rationality and the development of formal rationality.
4. Formal rationality: It involves calculating means-ends. Only in the West, with the advent of industrialization, did formal rationality emerge. Particularly in the economic, legal, and scientific institutions as well as in the bureaucratic form of dominance are found the universally applicable rules, laws, and regulations that define formal rationality in the West.

Ritzer identifies six fundamental aspects of formal rationality:

- (1) **Calculability:** Capability to count or quantify something.
- (2) Finding the most effective ways to achieve a goal.
- (3) **Predictability:** Things function consistently from one moment in time or location to the next.
- (4) **Substituting nonhuman technologies for human ones:** Nonhuman technologies (such as computerised systems) are thought to be more calculable, effective, and predictable than human technologies.
- (5) Gain control over a variety of uncertainties, especially those brought on by the people who operate them or provide their services.
- (6) **Irrational effects:** Rational systems frequently have a number of irrational effects on the people who use them, the systems themselves, as well as on society at large.

The struggle between formal and substantive rationality has been "particularly fateful in the development of rationalisation processes in the West." (1980 Kalberg).

In his interpretation of the capitalist economy and the modern western world as an iron cage of formally rational structures, Weber used rationalisation most effectively and meaningfully. "Two great rationalising forces," according to Weber, are capitalism and bureaucracies. In fact, according to Weber, bureaucracies and capitalism both derive from the same fundamental sources (particularly asceticism of the inner world), involve similar rational and methodical action, reinforce one another, and thereby contribute to the rationalisation of the Occident. According to Weber, the capitalist was the bureaucrat's only true competitor in terms of technical proficiency and factual knowledge.

Max Weber's writings concentrated on the issues facing western civilization, rationalising and demystifying various facets of contemporary life. A growing sense of disenchantment with the world was present as a result of the drastic changes in social life. Weber used the term "rationalization" to describe the process of eliminating spontaneity and individuality from life in order to make it more efficient and predictable. Growing systems of efficiency that were intended to improve humanity's well-being, in Weber's view, result in what he called the "iron cage," which traps the individual.

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### 3.7 BUREAUCRACY

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Weber's interest in rationalisation led him to investigate the operations and growth of large-scale organisations in the public and private sectors of contemporary societies. Bureaucracy is a particular instance of rationalisation, or the application of rationalisation to human organisation.

Weber believed that bureaucratic coordination of human action is the distinguishing feature of contemporary social structures.

Weber's sociological interest in authority structures was motivated by his political goals. His assumptions about the nature of action were consistent with his analysis of authority structures. Weber was primarily interested in what he termed authority, which were legitimate forms of dominance. The rational, traditional, and charismatic are the three bases upon which authority is legitimised for followers. Weber was fascinated by bureaucracy, which he viewed as the purest form of rational legal authority. The ideal bureaucracy was defined by the following characteristics:

1. There is a continuous flow of official business.
2. Transactions are conducted in accordance with specified regulations
3. The responsibility and authority of each official are part of a hierarchy of authority.
4. Officials do not own the resources necessary to carry out their responsibilities, but they are held accountable for their use.
5. Offices cannot be appropriated by their occupants; they are always considered part of the organisation.

6. Official transactions are conducted using written documents.

In Weber's analysis, bureaucracy fits the spirit of rational capitalism. A capitalist market economy demanded that the official business of administration be carried out precisely, without ambiguity, continuously, and as quickly as possible.

He noted that bureaucracy encourages a rationalist lifestyle. He referred to bureaucracies as "escape-proof" and the most difficult to eliminate once established. The ideal typical bureaucracy is an exaggeration of bureaucracies' rational characteristics. He differentiated between the ideal typical bureaucracy and the ideal typical bureaucrat. He saw bureaucracies as structures and bureaucrats as positions within these structures.

Among the most important factors that contributed to the development of modern bureaucracy are:

1. The evolution of the money economy, which ensured a steady source of revenue for the bureaucracy through a stable taxation system.
2. The quantitative expansion of administrative duties.
3. Changes in the quality of administrative tasks
4. The superiority of bureaucracy over all other organisational structures.
5. The complexity and specialisation of contemporary culture, which necessitates the objective and emotionally detached expert
6. The logical interpretation of the law
7. The concentration of material means of management in the hands of industrialists and public organisations such as the government or the military.
8. The eradication of economic and social disparities and the rise of representative mass democracy in the twenty-first century.

The bureaucratization and rationalisation of the modern economies of the West were inevitable and unavoidable. In the end, bureaucratization would result in the depersonalization of human relations in government and business.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is Rationalization?

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### 3.8 SOCIAL ACTION

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Social action theories formed the foundation of Weber's sociology. An illustration of the use of an ideal type is found in Weber's discussion of social action. For a scientific analysis of society, the qualities of action and meaning in combination were crucial. Weber made a distinction between proactive and defensive behaviour. He was interested in actions where thought processes intervened between the occurrence of a stimulus and the final response. When people gave their actions a personal meaning, action occurred. According to Weber, "Action is social in so far as it takes into account the behaviour of others and is thereby guided in its course by the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual."

His action theory placed an emphasis on the individual rather than the collective. He was particularly interested in the actual justifications for observable behaviour provided by the actors themselves. Actions have no purpose if no meaning is assigned by the individual.

He defines four fundamental types of action using his ideal type methodology to explain what action means.

1. Reasonable action in relation to the goal: In this case, the actor decides the goal and selects his means based on how effectively they will help him achieve the goal. for instance, getting a higher education from a reputable university to land a good job.
2. Moral behaviour in relation to a value: in this case, means are chosen based on their effectiveness, but ends are established by moral principles. Taking the captain of a ship as an illustration,
3. Affective or emotional action: In this case, the motivation and means of the action are determined by emotions. The actor's emotional state influences the action. as in a mother slapping her child.
4. Traditional action: In this case, the goals and means are established by rituals and customs, such as adhering to a certain custom because it is the ritual.

Despite the fact that Weber identified four ideal types of action, he was well aware that in reality, every action involves a mix of at least some of the four types. Sociologists, according to Weber, have a much better chance of comprehending more rational action than they do action that is dominated by affect or tradition.

To understand how contemporary western societies differed from those in the past, Weber provided a typology. Every aspect of contemporary social life, including politics, economics, law, and interpersonal relationships, is dominated by goal-oriented rationality in modern western society. This is the result of the persistent application of a means-to-ends utility in human behaviour.

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### 3.9 PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM

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In his classic book *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber tried to show that economic factors are not the only ones that matter. He thought that Marx's main weakness and failure was that he only looked at economic factors.

Weber showed in *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* how Protestantism, especially Calvinism, affected the rise of the spirit of capitalism.

Several things brought about the connection between religious beliefs and economic goals. Weber saw that Protestants, especially certain sects of Protestants, were the leaders of business and had more money and economic power than other religious groups, especially Catholics. So, he wanted to find out if the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism are basically in line with each other. He also wanted to know how much the religious beliefs of people in India, China, and the Middle East helped or hurt the growth of capitalism. Weber used the idea of an ideal type to explain what Protestant Ethic was and how capitalism worked. The term "Protestant Ethic" meant a set of beliefs and values that make up the religious ideal. In its best form, capitalism is a complex activity that aims to make as much money as possible by organising and running production in a smart way.

Weber didn't agree with the idea that capitalism started in the West in the 16th and 17th centuries because of the economic conditions at the time. He also didn't agree with the idea that the development of capitalism was caused by the "acquisitive instinct." He thought that the religious ideas that came out of the religious revolutions of the 1600s were the most important factor.

Weber identified a number of Protestant values, particularly Calvinism, that contributed to the growth of capitalism.

1. A shift from a ritualistic and otherworldly orientation to practical pragmatism. Rather than engaging in mysticism, human society should seek to understand natural order. This was essentially an anti-ritualistic attitude that encouraged the advancement of science and rational inquiry.
2. A new perspective on work: Work is worship. Work, according to the Protestant Ethic, is a virtue that contributes to God's glory. Pursuit of

economic interests was more than just self-interest; it was an ethical duty.

Max Weber

3. The concept of calling: Calvinism entailed the concept of predestination; people were predestined to be either saved or damned, and nothing could change their ultimate fate. They believed that there are signs by which God tells each individual whether or not they are saved. People were encouraged to work hard and be diligent in order to discover the signs of salvation that could be found in economic success. The Calvinists were encouraged to seek profitable enterprises, accumulate wealth, and become men of vocation in order to prove their destiny.
4. A new attitude toward loan interest collection: Calvinism permitted the collection of interest on loans, which Catholicism prohibited. This resulted in increased economic activity, the establishment of lending institutions, new investments, and the creation of new floating capital.
5. Restriction on the consumption of alcoholic beverages, rejection of holidays: this encouraged working throughout the year for maximum utilisation of capital and other investments, resulting in higher productivity - and encouragement of literacy and learning.
6. Protestant asceticism: The Protestant Ethic includes the idea of abstaining from earthly pleasures. On the one hand, it encourages people to accumulate wealth while prohibiting the use of wealth for pleasure. Thus, profit is pursued incessantly, not for enjoyment, but simply for the satisfaction of producing more and more.

Weber was well aware that social and economic conditions have an inverse relationship with religion. Though he did not address such relationships, he made it clear that his goal was not to replace the one-sided materialistic explanation attributed to Marxists with a one-sided spiritualistic and ideological interpretation.

Weber addressed the spiritual and material barriers to the rise of capitalism in order to explain why capitalism did not emerge in other societies. Weber discovered a variety of non-religious social and economic conditions favorable to the development of capitalism in China and India, but the Confucian ethical system and the Hindu concept of karma were not.

### **Religion and capitalism in China:**

China possessed the necessary material conditions for the development of capitalism. There was a tradition of acquisitiveness and unscrupulous competition in China, there was industry, an enormous capacity for work, powerful guilds, the population was growing, and precious metals were increasing in value. Capitalism did not emerge in China as it did in the West, despite all of these material conditions. There was capitalism in China—one could find moneylenders seeking high rates of profit—but the market and other components of the rational capitalistic system were missing. According to Weber, social, structural, and religious barriers in China impeded the development of capitalism.



**Among the structural factors were the following:**

1. **The typical Chinese community's structure:** The Chinese community was held together by rigid kinship bonds in the form of sibs. The elders ruled the sibs, who were self-contained entities with little interaction with other sibs. This favoured small, encapsulated land holdings and a household-based economy over a market economy. Land partitioning stifled technological progress; agricultural production remained with peasants, and industrial production remained with small-scale artisans. Because of the sibs' allegiance, modern cities, which were the centres of western capital, struggled to develop. The central government was unable to effectively govern these units.
2. **The Chinese state's structure:** The patrimonial state governed by tradition was a structural impediment to the development of capitalism. A logical and calculable administration and law enforcement system was largely absent. With few formal laws covering commerce, no central court, and a rejection of legal formalism, the rise of capitalism was hampered. The general administrative structure, as well as bureaucratic administration officials with vested material interests, acted in opposition to the development of capitalism.
3. **The nature of the Chinese language:** According to Weber, the nature of the Chinese language worked against rationality by making systematic thought difficult. Intellectual thought took the form of parables, making the development of a cumulative body of knowledge difficult.
4. The two dominant religious ideas systems in China, Confucianism and Taoism, fought against the development of the spirit of capitalism. For higher positions in Confucianism, literary knowledge was more important than technical knowledge. It promoted "a very bookish literary education."

Economic activities and the state of the economy were unimportant to the literary intellectuals. The Confucianism worldview eventually became state policy. The Chinese government played a minor role in rationally influencing the economy and society. Only Confucians were allowed to serve as officials, and all other competitors, including the bourgeoisie, prophets, and priests, were barred from doing so.

Rather than striving for salvation, as Calvinists do, Confucius accepted things as they were. Confucians rejected thrift, believing that active participation in profitable enterprise was morally dubious because it focused solely on good position rather than high profits. All of this slowed the rise of capitalism. Weber saw Taoism as a mystical Chinese religion in which the supreme good was regarded as a psychic state, a state of mind, rather than a state of grace obtained through real-world behaviour. Taoism was traditional and did not inspire innovative action in this world. Confucianism and Taoism opposed the rise of capitalism because they had no desire to change the world or build a capitalist system.

## Religion and capitalism in India:

Max Weber

The structural barriers of caste, with their restrictions on social mobility and regulation of minute details of people's lives, hampered the development of capitalism in India. The upper castes, particularly the Brahmins, shared Confucius' belief that certain tasks were beneath them. Indifference to world affairs was a barrier to the development of capitalism, with an emphasis on literary knowledge, observance of elegance in manners, and properties in conduct. The Hindu religion, with its emphasis on reincarnation, salvation through faithfully following the rules, and the world as transient, failed to produce people capable of creating a capitalist economic system and a rationally ordered society.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Write a note on types of Social Action.

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Write a note on Weber's Views on Chinese Religion.

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## 3.10 SUMMARY

Max Weber (1864-1920) was an economist, musician, lawyer, philosopher, and historian. Much of his work was devoted to the development of modern capitalism. Economic factors, according to Weber, are important, but ideas and values have an equal impact on social change. Weber bridged the gap between sociology and history. He contended that sociology seeks to formulate type concepts and generalise empirical process uniforms.

History is concerned with the explanation of the causes of people's actions, structures, and personalities. Sociologists can use these concepts to make generalisations, but these generalisations are not historical. Weber was one of the first sociologists to think of sociology as a descriptive and interpretive discipline. He believed that history is made up of an infinite number of

distinct events. By combining the specific and the general, Weber hoped to create a science that reflected the complexities of social life.

Hermeneutics, a special approach to the understanding and interpretation of published writings, informed Weber's understanding of Verstehen. Weber believed that because we can understand causal knowledge in the social sciences, we can have a special understanding of social life (Verstehen). Weber's theories of Verstehen and causal explanation shaped the ideal type. A generalisation of the essential, albeit exaggerated, characteristics of any social phenomenon is an ideal type. They are heuristic tools for conducting empirical research and comprehending specific aspects of the social world.

The ideal type is fundamentally "a model of what an agent would do if he acted completely rationally in accordance with the rationality criteria in his behaviour sense." According to Max Weber, the more extreme the ideal type, the more useful it is for historical research.

Weber's sociology was built on social action theories. "Action is social insofar as it considers the behaviour of others and is guided in its course by the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual," Weber writes. In reality, every action involves a combination of at least some of Weber's four types. Weber demonstrates how Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, contributed to the growth of capitalism in Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. A "Protestant Ethic" is a set of beliefs and values that comprise the religious ideal.

Capitalism in its purest form is an activity aimed at making as much money as possible. According to Weber, Calvinism provided a new perspective on work and the concept of predestination. It encouraged people to work hard and save money while outlawing the use of money for pleasure. These included social, structural, and religious barriers in China that hampered the development of capitalism. Confucianism and Taoism, the two dominant religious ideas systems, fought against the development of capitalism.

In China and India, Confucianism and Taoism stymied the development of capitalism. Literary intellectuals were unconcerned about economic activities or the state of the economy. Taoism, according to Weber, was a mystical Chinese religion in which the supreme good was regarded as a psychic state rather than a state of grace obtained through real-world behaviour.

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### 3.11 QUESTIONS

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1. Examine Weber's impact on social action.
2. What is an Ideal Type?
3. Discuss Weber's methodology.
4. Talk about the role of Protestant ethics in the evolution of capitalism.
5. Compare and contrast Marx and Weber's approaches to religion and capitalism.

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## TALCOTT PARSONS

### Unit Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Intellectual influence and historical background
- 4.2 Background
- 4.3 Voluntaristic Theory of Social Action
- 4.4 Elements of Social Action
- 4.5 Types of Action
- 4.6 Theory of Social System (AGIL)
- 4.7 Functional Pre-Requisites
- 4.8 Pattern-Variables and Social System
- 4.9 Criticism of Parsons Work
- 4.10 Questions
- 4.11 References

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES:

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- To study development of sociology through structural functionalism
- To comprehend the general analytical model suitable for analysing all types of society
- To evaluate the significance of social action in modern day society
- To analyse the theory of social system in everyday life.

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### 4.1 INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCE AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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The history of functionalist perspective can be traced to Comte's Consensus Universals', Spencer's Organic analogy, Pareto's Conception of society as a system in equilibrium and Durkheim's Casual – functional analysis. To Comte's consensus universals', the necessary correlation between the elements of society, was the very foundation of social structure. Through his organic biological model, Spencer drew an analogy, similarities between biological and social organism. Durkheim insisted on the primacy of the system over elements and maintained that social facts, the proper subject matter of sociology are independent of the individual will and impose upon him from without. The two British Anthropologists, Radcliff-Brown and

Malinowski elaborated and codified functionalism as the basis of anthropological and sociological thinking. Structural functionalism is especially the work of Talcott Parson, Robert Merton, their students and followers. It was a major dominant sociological theory. However, it declined in last three decades and has receded recently.

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## 4.2 BACKGROUND

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Parsons was born on December 13, 1920 in Colorado Spring Colorado. He came from a religious and intellectual background. Parsons was very much affected by Max Weber's work. He taught at Harvard and was made the Chairman of Harvard sociology department in 1944 where he also chaired the department of social relations. By 1980's there was resurgences (come back) in Parsonian theory not only in the United States but around the world. He died on May 8, 1979 at the age of 59.

In 1937, Parsons published his first major work, "The Structure of Social Action". With exhaustive and detailed scholarship seldom equalised in sociological work, Parsons delineated and strengths and weaknesses of prominent thinkers in three main intellectual traditions.

The importance of Parson's 'The Structure of Social Action' was not immediately recognized. Nonetheless it became a unique strategy for building sociological theory that came to be known as 'structural – functionalism'. His work is regarded as a land mark in that it initiated a new course- that of functional analysis which dominated theoretical development from early 1940's to the middle of 1960's. Parson's book made American sociologists receptive to the rich heritage of the European sociological tradition. In this work, he attempted to develop a "Voluntaristic Theory of Social Action", by way of a creative synthesis of Durkheim, Weber and Pareto.

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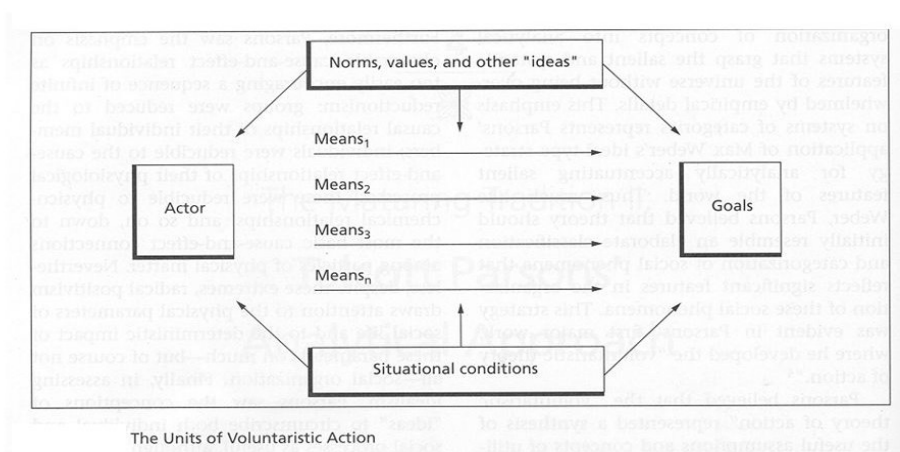
## 4.3 VOLUNTARISTIC THEORY OF SOCIAL ACTION

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In his book "**The structure of Social Action**", Parsons saw the Unit Act (individual act) as the focal point. The nature of this unit of action such as bowing down, reading a book, smiling at others spring from, integrative value-structure, from subjective internalization of evaluative criteria (ideas of right and wrong) in means-end relationship. In other word, each piece of social action manifests an end or goal in view, means adopted to achieve it, norms and values internalized by the individual etc.

He said that behaviour of an individual in the society is his social action. Anyone who performs some action is called an actor. The actor does not act in a vacuum but in a particular situation. Thus, for Parsons, social action, actor and situation are closely linked to each other. The actor creates the social action and in turn gets affected by it. Thus, social action involves 3 aspects—an actor, a situation and the actor's orientation to that situation.

## Talcott Parsons: *The Structure of Social Action*



There 2 types of orientation-'motivational' and 'value'.

**Motivational Orientation:** It supplies energy to the action. Motivation is based on the principle of gratification and deprivation. The actor seeks to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. It is of 3 types:

- i. **Cognitive:** This is a rational action. The knowledge of the situation helps the actor to determine the course of his action.
- ii. **Cathartic:** This action involves emotions or sentiments. Any act which is enjoyable is done by the actor and the one which is painful is avoided. Here the actor has to control himself and judge accordingly for e.g. Taking treatment may be painful but yet the patients have to take it.
- iii. **Evaluation:** The actor makes a choice between various interests. He criticizes and decides which situation is better.

**Value Orientation:** It refers to observing certain norms and values. It is of three types

- i. **Appreciative:** It refers to the emotional aspects of whether the action is appreciated or not.
- ii. **Cognitive:** It refers to the knowledge about the action.
- iii. **Moral:** It refers to the level of values involved in an action.

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### 4.4 ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL ACTION:

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- Actors are viewed as goal seeking.
- Actors are individual persons.
- Actors also possess alternative means to achieve the goal.

The above figure represents this conceptualization of voluntarism.



- a) **Heredity and Environment:** This element includes the biological and environmental aspect which determine the action.
- b) **Means and Ends:** The actor must know what are the various means or resources available which can help him to achieve his final goal.
- c) **Ultimate Values:** Values influence the goal, the direction of action as well as have control over the nature of action. It is the link between the values and action.

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### 4.5 TYPES OF ACTION:

#### PARSONS HAS IDENTIFIED 3 TYPES OF ACTION.

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1. **Instrumental action:** This action is performed in order to achieve some aims. Thus the action becomes an instrument through which aims are achieved. Hence this type of action is called as instrumental action. For e.g. studying hard to pass an examination is an instrumental action.
2. **Expressive action:** This type of action satisfies the immediate needs of the actor. The aim of the action is not regarding the future but about the present. In order to achieve certain things in the certain action is performed. This type of action is called as expressive action. For e.g.: if a child makes mistake then immediately punishment given by the parents is an expressive action.
3. **Moral action:** This type of action is carried out in order to satisfy some important values. The immediate aim or the future aim is not important but the moral value is important. This type of action is called moral action. For e.g. people donating blood to serve humanity is a moral action.

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### 4.6 THEORY OF SOCIAL SYSTEM (AGIL)

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Parsons focused on the unit act but in the theory of social system his focus shifted from the unit act to the social system. Talcott parsons attempted to develop a perfect general analysis model suitable for analysing all types of collectivises. Unlike the Marxists, who focused on the occurrences of radical change, Parsons explored why societies are stable and functioning. According to Parsons social systems have needs. In order to survive and continue each social system or subsystem has four functions that must be met. His model is called AGIL. It was one of the first open systems theories of organisations.

#### The social system has the following characteristics:

1. It involves a process of interaction between two or more actors; the focus is on the Interaction process.

2. The actor's orientations may be either goal to be pursued or mean to achieve the goal.
3. All action are inter-dependent and directed towards a common goal in the social system.
4. There is also a consensus of normative and cognitive expectations, for e.g. in family, all members follow the norms and values and are oriented to a common goal i.e. family unity.

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#### 4.7 FUNCTIONAL PRE-REQUISITES:

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Every social system is faced with 4 functional prerequisites. They are called AGIL.

Adaptation	Goal Attainment
Integration	Latency

**ADAPTATION:** It refers to the relationship between the system and its environment. The institution of economy is mainly concerned with the function.

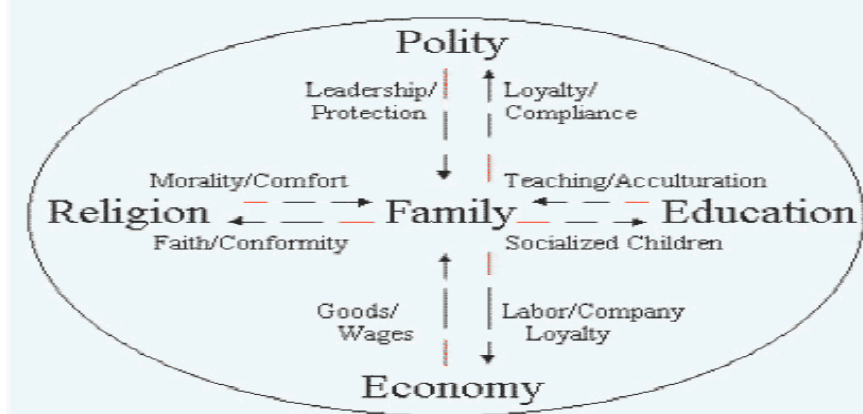
**GOAL ATTAINMENT:** It refers to the need for all societies to set goals and mobilizing resources for their attainment. This is institutionalized through political system. Government not only sets goal but also allocate resources to achieve them.

**INTEGRATION:** It refers primarily to the 'adjustment of conflict'. It is concerned with adjustments on the parts of social system. The law is the main institution which meets this need.

**LATNECY-PATTERN MAINTENANCE:** It refers to maintenance of basic pattern of values, institutionalized in society. Institutions which perform this function are family, the educational system and religion.

The important subsystem of modern society performs activities which fall in 'adaptive', function; subsystems like courts, hospitals, health agencies which tend to resolve conflict whether in relation to other or of health, fall into "I" category; churches, schools, kinship groups like family perform the function of 'pattern- maintenance' and generation and allocation of power, hence fall in 'g'.

## Parson's Structural-Functional Model Of Society – Institutional Interaction



Parson mentioned that any social system can be analysed in terms of above mentioned four functional pre-requisites identified by him. Thus, all parts of society can be understood in reference to the functions they perform in the adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance system.

Parsons visualize an overall action system, with culture, social structure, personality, and organism comprising its constituent subsystem. Each of these subsystems is seen as fulfilling one of the four system requisites – A, G, I, L – of the overall action system. The foundations of a social system as Parsons explained are motivated actors whose behaviour is influenced by the expectation of other actors. The importance of values and norms in Parson's system makes it appropriate to call this system "normative functionalism".

Parsons views about social system are available to us in his book entitled, 'social system', which was brought out in 1952. As Parsons once stated 'Pattern contribution; they denote the 'alternatives' which appear both in norms, roles expectation patterns and in individual choices. In his book, The Social System', he gives five pairs of alternatives or pattern variables.

## 4.8 PATTERN-VARIABLES AND SOCIAL SYSTEM

### 1. Self-interest Versus Collective Interest

Social norms may define as legitimate the pursuit of the actor's private interests or make it obligatory for him to act in the interests of the group or collectively. For example, an individual may renounce worldly pleasures for the ultimate, spiritual gains or may be appointed as the religious head of a community where he is made to lead a life of an ascetic in the interest of the community.

### 2. Affectivity Versus Affective Neutrality

The pattern (of behaviour) is affective if it permits immediate gratification (satisfaction) of actors' interests. It tends to be affectively neutral; it imposes discipline, demands renouncement in favour of other interests. For instance, pursuing a career of music or acting may

be affective for one is interested in these art forms. But when parents insist on his following another more lucrative or prestigious professional course, it becomes affectively neutral,

### **3. Universalism Versus Particularism**

Universalism refers to highly generalised value standards such as peace, truth, justice which may influence individual behaviour. For instance, Gautam Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi, in our own context preached and practiced higher values of life. Particularism, on the other hand, refers to action-patterns that have significance for a particular actor.

### **4. Performance Versus Quality**

Here emphasis may be on 'achievement' (for originally it was achievement versus ascription) of certain goals; whether an individual works hard and achieves the goal by his own ability or merit. The other pattern variable refers to quality or ascription which means individual's inborn status.

### **5. Specificity Versus Diffuseness**

An interest can be defined specifically so that the actor knows what he is interested in. His interest is specific, whether it is sports, music or theatre. Diffuseness refers to actor's wider or diffused interest that is he may be interested in many things. Here either he has to choose one interest and pursue it or his immediate superiors or elders make the decision for him.

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## **4.9 CRITICISM OF PARSONS WORK:**

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1. Parson's theory is based on the arbitrary assumption that sociological theory is a partial aspect of a general theory of human behaviour.
2. In spite of his qualifying explanations, it is inseparable from psychological theory.
3. While Parsons' theory of culture meets these objections, he views culture as patterned system of symbols which are objects of the orientation of actors and interprets culture not as an empiric system, as he depicts both personality and society, but as a kind of abstraction of elements from these systems.
4. Lastly Parsons' theoretical works are written in difficult style which complicates the tasks for readers and especially students.

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## **4.10 QUESTIONS**

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1. Explain Talcott Parsons view on Structural Functionalism

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## 4.11 REFERENCES:

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## MERTON'S FUNCTIONALISM

### Unit Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Intellectual Influence and Historical Background
- 5.2 Definition of function
- 5.3 Merton's Concept of Functionalism
- 5.4 Postulates of Function
- 5.5 Types of function
- 5.6 Manifest and Latent Function
- 5.7 Criticism
- 5.8 Questions
- 5.9 References

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES:

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- To evaluate Robert Merton's model of functionalism in its original framework
- To understand Postulates of Function and its critique
- To analyse various types of functions and its significance in society

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### 5.1 INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCE AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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Although Robert Merton's approach to structural functionalism differs substantially from that of Parsons, he has also been influential in shaping contemporary American sociology. Born in Philadelphia and graduate of Temple University. Merton received his Ph.D from Harvard in 1936 where he studied under Parsons. Merton's work in the "Role model" emerged from his theory of "Reference group", or the group to which individuals compare them, but to which they do not necessarily belong. Merton stressed that, rather than a person assuming one role and one status, they have a status set in the social structure to which a whole set of expected behaviours is attached. Although both Merton and Parsons are structural functionalists, there are important differences between them. While Parson advocated the creation of grand theories, Merton favoured more limited, middle range theories. Also, Merton was more favourable toward Marxian theories than Parsons was.

According to the functionalist viewpoint, society is a complex system whose components work together to ensure society's stability and survival. All of society's components, or structures, such as the educational system, criminal justice system, and economic system, have a role or duty to do.

When all of the parts are working properly, society as a whole run smoothly. However, if one portion fails, there would be a negative impact on society.

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## 5.2 DEFINITION OF FUNCTION

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In terms of structural functionalism, Merton felt that the focus should be on social functions rather than on individual motives. Functionalist perspective focus on three points: function of the society, function in the society and function towards the society.

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## 5.3 MERTON'S CONCEPT OF FUNCTIONALISM

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Robert Merton made a significant contribution to sociology in terms of society's functional perspective. Merton and other functionalists saw society as a complex organism with many sections, each having a specific function to perform. Some functions were intended, while others were not. He also admitted that some functions actually caused society to be disrupted. The visible and latent functions and dysfunctions are terms used to describe these functions.

In conceiving of society as a system it becomes natural to see it, like other systems, as composed of parts that are interrelated and whose operations have consequences on the whole. For example, when examining a simple system like the human body it becomes readily apparent that the various organs are interrelated and impact the overall health of the body. So is it with sociocultural systems. Functional analysis is a consequence of thinking of society as a total system. Functionalism is the analysis of social phenomena in terms of their effect on other phenomena and on the sociocultural system as a whole.

Merton's concept of functionalism differs from those of other functionalists. Merton, like Durkheim, believes that deviation and crime are "natural" components of society, but he does not believe that crime is necessary to foster unity or achieve social progress. Rather, Merton contends that there is something about the American social structure, specifically the distribution of money and opportunity that necessitates crime in order to maintain society's stability in the face of structural inequality.

Merton, who depicts society as a large machine, argues that it is better to think of it as a combination of the cultural "goals" that the society believes its members should strive for and the "means" that are thought, legally or ethically, to be appropriate ways for individuals to achieve these objectives. In an ideal society, the resources will be available to help all of its people achieve their objectives.

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## 5.4 POSTULATES OF FUNCTION

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Merton however criticized what he saw as the three basic postulates of functional analysis developed by anthropologists, Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown.



**a) Postulate of the functional unity of society**

Any element of the social system, according to this concept, is functional for the entire system. All aspects of society are considered as cooperating to maintain and integrate society as a whole.

This means that the various parts of a social system are highly integrated. Every custom belief, ritual i.e. every unit of culture is functional in the sense that it contributes to the maintenance of the whole society. Merton challenges this premise, arguing that this 'functional oneness' is dubious, especially in complex, highly varied cultures. To demonstrate his thesis, he used the example of religious diversity. Religion may likely to separate rather than unify in a society with many different faiths. Merton says that all the elements may not always contribute to the survival of the society e.g. dowry custom, child marriage or female infanticide in India.

**b) Postulate of Universal Functionalism**

This presupposes that "all standardised social or cultural forms have good benefits." For example, 19th-century anthropologists argued that every ongoing social pattern or habit must have positive functions that contribute to the system's maintenance, and labelled any pattern whose functions could not be easily defined as "survivals."

According to functionalist every custom, material object, idea or belief as Malinowski says fulfil some vital function in every type of civilization. Merton says a custom may be good for a particular community but definitely not for others. e.g. sacrifice of goat among Muslims. A social custom that has positive consequences for the elite may have negative consequences for the masses e.g. the authority of elders may be accepted in a joint family set up but not in a nuclear family.

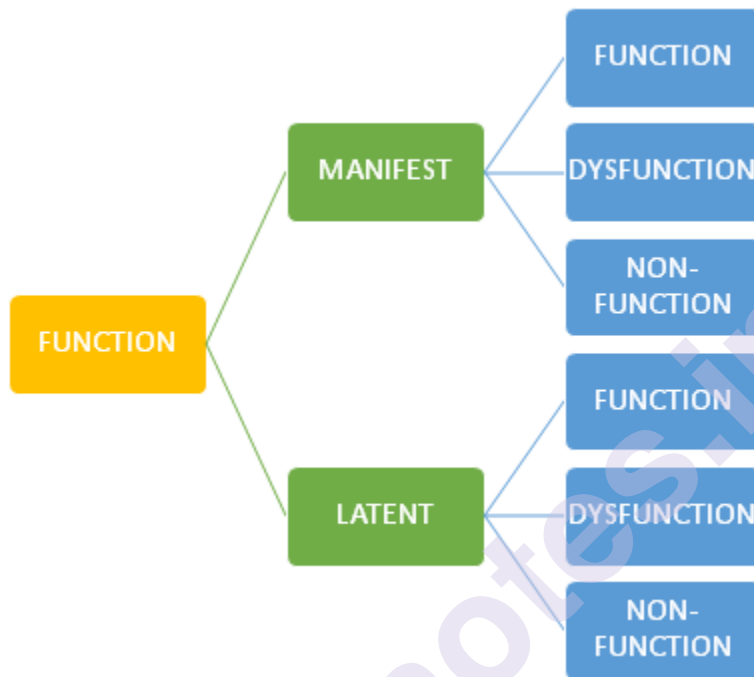
**c) The postulate of indispensability**

According to traditional functionalist if a social pattern is well established, it must be meeting some basic needs and therefore it must be essential. Merton objects to this stand by saying that some institutional function can be performed by different alternative. For e.g. if social integration is the function of religion, this function could also be served by a strong centralized government, a traditional monarch, a liberal, democrat or military dictator. Merton says that all structures and institutions are functionally necessary for society and that they cannot be replaced. But Merton has clarified that the same function can be performed equally well by other functional alternative. This may result in similar functions being performed by different institutions much better and prevents the existence of a status quo.

These three postulates, according to Merton, are only articles of faith. They are matters that should be investigated without making any assumptions.

Merton believes that his functionalist analysis framework disproves the claim that functionalism is ideologically driven. He contends that many aspects of society should be examined in terms of their societal 'effects' or 'consequences.' Merton believes that because these outcomes can be functional, dysfunctional, or non-functional, the value judgement implicit in the premise that all elements of the system are functioning is gone.

## 5.5 TYPES OF FUNCTION



**Function:** Merton says that the focus of the structural functionalist should be on a social function rather than on individual notions. Functions according to him, are defined as those observed consequences which make for the adaption or adjustment of a given system.

**Non-Function:** Merton also presented the idea of non-function. They are those functions which might have positive consequences in the past but now in today's time they have become unnecessary but are being continued only in the name of traditional. For e.g. many social and religious customs of keeping fast for a long life of a husband, and children as observed by the north Indians are totally irrelevant but continue only in the name or traditional.

**Dysfunctions:** are those consequences which are detrimental (harmful) to the existence of society. For e.g. Religious riots/communal riots are the dysfunctions of religion.

Merton pointed out that even if a structure is dysfunctional for the system as a whole, it still can exist. Discrimination against blacks, females, and other minority groups may be dysfunctional for society, but it persists because it is functional for a segment of the social system; discrimination against females, for example, is generally functional for males. Even for the

group for which they are functional, however, these forms of discrimination are not without some dysfunctions. Discrimination against women affects both men and women. One could argue that discrimination has a negative impact on those who discriminate by keeping large numbers of people unemployed and raising the risk of social conflict.

Merton argued that not all structures are required for the functioning of the social system. Some aspects of our social structure can be removed. This aids functional theory in overcoming yet another conservative tendency. Functionalism allows for real societal transformation by acknowledging that some systems are disposable. Discrimination against various minority groups, for example, could allow our society to continue to exist (and even improve).

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## 5.6 MANIFEST AND LATENT FUNCTION

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Merton also introduced the concept of manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions are those that are intended and visible whereas latent functions are those that are unintended and invisible e.g. construction of temples or churches is the manifest function of religion but encouragement to act or science through religion is the latent function.

Merton has said the same social arrangement may have positive and negative results. Religion is seen as means of salvation by the faithful but it is characterized as opium of the 'masses' by Marxists, since it makes people lazy and dependent on fate. Therefore, what is functional in one group may be dysfunctional in another group.

Let's look at the social structure of a college or university and identify some of the manifest and latent functions that apply to them. Many people attend college because 1) they need the degree to get the job they want and 2) to make more money. So, when asked what the function or purpose of college is, one may automatically think 'to get a degree.'

This is true, but the degree is the result of going to college, not the function of the college. The function of college is to teach you the skills and knowledge necessary to earn a degree, which, in turn, can help you get the job you want making the money you want. So, a manifest function, an intended or obvious job of college, is to prepare you for your future careers.

There are many other functions of a college - how about to find your future spouse or to stimulate the economy? So, when asked why you want to go to college, how many of you said 'to find your future wife or husband' or said 'to stimulate the economy'? I bet not many of us if any! However, these are latent functions - the unintended or not-so-obvious functions - of college. Many people do meet their future spouses at some point while attending college. Also, once you've graduated and had that position you wanted, earning the money you wanted, you spend money on various things like housing, food, trips, clothes, cars, movies, etc. Spending money on all of these things stimulates the economy!

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## 5.7 CRITICISM:

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Merton's terminology of latent and manifest function was unfortunate given that his concern was to distinguish between latent function and manifest motive. It encouraged critics in their view that sociological functionalism neglected agency, just when agency was being identified as a central concern.

Merton's legacy has been debated since his death. One of the key objections levelled at those who have pursued his anomie theory in the study of crime and delinquency is the definition of "legitimate means" or possibilities. Is it true that providing equal chances reduces crime.

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## 5.8 QUESTIONS

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1. Explain Merton's Functionalism with special reference to Manifest and Latent Functions

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## 5.9 REFERENCES:

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## CONFLICT THEORIES

### Karl Marx- Dialectic Materialism, Class conflict, Alienation

#### Unit Structure

- 6A.1 Objectives
- 6A.2 Introductions
- 6A.3 Economic infrastructure and Socio-Economic superstructure
- 6A.4 Class conflict and class struggle
- 6A.5 The theory of class struggle
- 6A.6 Criticism of Marx's theory
- 6A.7 Summary
- 6A.8 Questions for Self Study
- 6A.9 References

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#### 6A.1 OBJECTIVES

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- To introduce students to Marx's Economics infrastructure and Socio-economic super structure.
- To examine the role of the ruling class in Marx's theory of state

To understand Marx's theory of proletariat Revolution To study Marx's views on the withering away of the state

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#### 6A.2 INTRODUCTION

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Marxian theory of state has generally been neglected in the social sciences. One of the reasons is that Marx himself never formulated a coherent theory of state. Elements of the theory of state are widely scattered in the works of both Marx and Engels.

In this unit an attempt is made to present the Marxian view of the state, the role of the ruling class and importance of the proletariat revolution. Lastly, this unit also discusses Marx's view on the withering away of the state.

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#### 6A.3 ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUPERSTRUCTURE:

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Marx's historical materialism is incomplete without economic determinism. Although Marx did not consistently argue for a crude economic determinism, he left no doubt that he considered the economy to be the foundation of the whole socio-cultural system.

Throughout their study, Marx and Engels emphasized the primacy of economics in human relationships, and the centrality of the economic dimensions in political structures. The distribution or the means and relations of production in the Marxian sense, constitute the basic structure of society on which all other social institutions are built, particularly the state and legal system. According to Engels - the production of immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given period, form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, the ideas on art and even on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved.

Marx has given importance to material production and growth. For him, as the human society moved from primitive stage to modern stage, they experienced improvement in techniques of production as a result of which they enjoyed better life. At the same time mode of production determined the level of living — the pattern of relationship, social hierarchy and cultural life. For example, in hunting society when man did not use any complicated technology or to say used very simple instruments, their material growth was very low. They led simple social and cultural life. Leadership was hereditary and the system of transmission of knowledge was very informal and simple. Kinship relations dominated every aspect of life. Their religious life patterned around nature. Then in agricultural society people led little complicated life, - formed class and caste hierarchy. Landowners exploited landless - the social pattern moved from group life to individual proprietorships. The life was centred around land and animals. People had individual possessions. Thus, mode of production of essential goods and services determines the rest of society i.e. family system, polity structure, religious or recreational pattern. According to Karl Marx, economic system is the most dominating system, determines the mode of living in other areas. Thus, he established economic determinism.

Social change is observed according to Marxists, when two groups economically differentiated i.e. one landowner and the other landless faced each other with opposition and conflict. As both have different interests and goals, they could never get along with each other. As a result of this struggle, the system changed to **Guild system** in urban areas and then later to capitalistic system. For Marx - a **mode of production** is both a method of performing labour and a method of exploiting labour.

Originally in prehistoric times, the appropriation (i.e. taking from nature for survival) involved no more than the taking by man of the readymade consumer objects from nature i.e. fish, fruits etc. but since that prehistoric stage man's appropriation from nature has involved the process of labour in which a raw material is transformed into a product for consumption. In other words, in Marx's theory history only begins when men produce for their reproduction. In this process of productive appropriation three elements (forces of production) are combined.

1. The personal activity of man himself (i.e. work/labour)
2. The object of work (i.e. land)
3. The instrument of work - This includes the means of production

(chemical, mechanical and technical aids in production) e.g. assembly line microchips etc. It also includes science and technology generally and even the manner in which (1), (2) and (3) are combined technically in the process of production.

These forces of production are really important. They refer to the way in which man relates to his natural laboratory - the earth and nature - and to the way in which he takes from nature what he needs to produce and reproduce the objective conditions of his existence.

In the beginning, says Marx there is a natural unity between these three forces of production; there is a natural unity of labour with its material prerequisites, e.g. man works and gathers food.

But being a social animal, men also have to divide labour, where the natural unity gets broken and three elements of production socially, at the same time increasingly more antagonistically combined. They became more and more negatively related to one another.

While the concept of "forces of production" refers to the three elements - land labour and the means of production including the manner of their technical combination, the concept of 'relations of production' refers to the social organization of this combination. That is to say where the production is surplus and that surplus is distributed - people interact with one another in the process of production and distribution. Earlier the appropriation of surplus labour occurs by means of political domination (as in both feudal and slave-based societies) or by means of ideological control (as in primitive or communal societies). The corresponding class relations are: bourgeois and proletariat, landlord and serf, free citizen and slave, zamindars and peasant.

People belonging to different stratum have different interests, goals and statuses. Therefore, they always face each other in conflicting situation. Since they have opposed interests and goals this is termed as class conflict and class struggle.

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## 6A.4 CLASS CONFLICT AND CLASS STRUGGLE :

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1. **Means of production:** This is a broad term covering instruments of production (tools, machines etc.), land, raw materials, building and the like. The ownership of the means of production is said by Marx, to determine the types of property relations : (a) Public or collective ownership in which the means of production are owned jointly by all the members of the community as was the case in the primitive communal society and (b) private ownership of the means of production as in the case of the capitalist system. In the Marxist theory, class relations arise out of the fact that when one segment of the population acquire ownership over the means of production, the other segment is deprived of this facility. Hence the other segment has to work for the first segment in order to survive. In the slave and feudal social systems, compulsion was of non- economic character including the use or threat of the use of violence and religious indoctrination.



2. **Basis and superstructure:** Productive relations are said to make up the economic structure of a society, which being regarded as primary, is referred to as basis. Out of 'basis' arise social institutions, ideas, religions and other social phenomena. These phenomena make up what is known as 'superstructure'.
3. **Mode of production:** This includes forces of production and their characteristic relations of production.
4. **Socio economic formation:** For Marx and Engels, the entire configuration of elements making up the mode of production, basis and superstructure is called socio economic formation or structure, e.g. primitive or communal, ancient or slave, feudal and capitalist.

Marx recognised that in the course of human social evolution each one of the structural levels of society (the ideological, the political and the economic) becomes dominant in turn (and in the same order) and that the most advanced stage to date is that in which the economic structure of society provides the organising principle for all human conduct and for the entire social fabric.

The essence of the conflict theory is that in any stage of material production when the existing mode of relations are found to be obsolete or inadequate to satisfy human needs, they are replaced by a new mode of production or a new set of relationships. As a result, there is quantitative growth and qualitative change in the forces of production. At each historical stage, haves and have-nots - exploiting and exploited classes fight against each other due to the contradiction in the manner in which production is organised e.g. primitive community system was broken when there was surplus. The user of surplus then dominated the farmers for their survival. Further the concept of private ownership led to the creation of two groups - landowners and feudal lords and slaves.

Groups of men who were more skilled in using tools or surplus for their own betterment made the other group entirely dependent on themselves. A new system of relationships between master and slaves was developed. Though, large construction, development of agriculture became possible due to this slavery system, a large section of men were deprived of basic human rights. Finally, the most oppressed classes - slave and poorest section of the freemen led to class struggle - slave movements. The feudal system emerged in which 'land' was owned and controlled by feudal lords and the peasant masses were compelled to work for the feudal lords. Serfs (peasants) were under obligations to produce. In the city guild system was developed which deprived the journeymen of their basic rights to produce. They then moved to the other system of production i.e. capitalistic mode of production as the result of their conflict with the masters.

Finally, in the capitalistic system where finer division of labour and machines were used to produce, two distinct groups were emerged - bourgeoisie i.e. owner of the means of production and workers i.e. proletariat who worked for the bourgeois. The workers were interested in raising their wages improving their work condition and standard of living and ultimately

ending the gap or exploitation but capitalists were interested more in making the profit thus increasing the gap by appropriating the surplus value created by the workers; thus, exploiting the labour.

Though the capitalist system has resulted in tremendous progress in science and technology, the tendency to exploit workers has resulted in conflict between the bourgeoisie and proletariats.

Marx has emphasized that workers must organize themselves to fight the injustice and exploitative tendencies in order to bridge the gap.

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## 6A.5 THE THEORY OF CLASS STRUGGLE:

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Class struggle constitutes the central theme of Marx's theoretical scheme which is based on the following premises:

1. "The history of all so far existing society is the history of class struggles."  
Freeman and Slave, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in other words exploiter and exploited stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted fight - sometimes open sometimes latent - each time ending in a revolutionary restructure of society at large.
2. "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness." This means that the social standing makes a man aware of himself.
3. "The ideas of the ruling class are in every age the ruling ideas;  
i.e. the class which is the dominant material force in society is at the same time its dominant intellectual force." This means that powerful class makes the law and sees that others follow them.

Marx says that feudalism gave the way to the emergence of capitalism. Each stage, after its completion leads to other stage which determines different way of life.

Marx developed his theory of class conflict in his analysis and critique of the capitalist society. The main ingredients of the theory may be summarized as follows:

### 1. The development of the proletariat:

The capitalist economic system transformed the masses of people into two groups - one is bourgeoisie - the capitalists and the other - workers or proletariat and created for them a common situation and inculcated in them an awareness of common interest. Through the development of class consciousness, the economic conditions of capitalism united the workers and constituted them into a class for itself i.e. proletariat.

## 2. The importance of property:

To Marx, the most important characteristic of any society is its structure of property, and the crucial determinant of an individual's behaviour is his relation to property. Classes are determined on the basis of individuals' relation to the means of production. It is not a man's work but his unique position in relation to the means of production that determines his position in society, e.g. if a man is the owner of the instruments of production he belongs to the upper class - bourgeoisie while if he is not the owner only a worker, he belongs to the proletariat - worker's class. A **class** is a group of individuals who perform the same function in the organization of production'. By other definition it is also a group of individuals who possess similar characteristics in terms of occupation, income, power, status, relation to production. Property divides the people in different classes. Development of class consciousness and conflict over the distribution of economic rewards fortified the class barriers. Since work is the basic form of man's self-realization, economic conditions of the particular historic era determine the social, political and legal structure or arrangement and set in movement the processes of evolution and social change.

## 3. Economic determinism:

Marx has given more importance to the economic conditions. For him economic conditions determine the other aspects of society i.e. political social legal or cultural e.g. agricultural mode of living determines the political system, social ranking, the system of law or the recreational pattern like dance or religious performances centred around crop or land. All the festivals involve happiness after a good crop, whereas in industrial mode of production the social cultural religious political systems are different. People become more mobile. The nature of their festival's changes. People become conscious of the political system and mass media.

For him, few persons monopolize the means of production and distribution, thus take control of market machinery. These economically powerful people also control political and ideological spheres. They make all important decisions and control those who do not own the means of production. According to Marx - the Bourgeoisie are the capitalists who own and proletariat are those who do not own. Bourgeoisie convert their economic power into political power and thus can also control courts, police and the military. Thus, ruling elites serve the interests of the capitalists.

## 4. Polarization of classes:

Developed in capitalist society is a tendency toward the radical polarization of classes. "The whole society breaks up more and more into two great hostile camps - two great directly antagonistic classes - bourgeoisie and proletariat" which are opposite to each other. "The capitalists who own the means of production and distribution and the working class - who do not own anything but selling labour." All

those who belong to same class develop consciousness of being in the same class. "They think, feel and act alike and unite to see that their interests are protected." They also share the same style of living and pattern of consumption. Thus "class consciousness is the awareness or knowledge among the members of a particular class that they share the same conditions of living, they face the common situation and either enjoy or are compelled to experience the same problems at work. Proletariats always feel that they are being exploited by the bourgeoisie since their (bourgeoisie's) only interest is to make maximum profits and this can be done only by cutting workers' salaries or benefits. Therefore, workers are hostile towards the bourgeoisie. For Marx, there are only two classes and each member of society is either in one class or the other.

### 5. **The theory of surplus value:**

Capitalists accumulate profit through the exploitation of workers. The value of any commodity is determined by the amount of labour it takes to produce it. 'The labour time necessary for the worker to produce a value equal to the one he receives in the form of wages is less than the actual duration of his work'. Let us say that the "worker spends five hours to produce a value equal to the one contained in his wage, but he works for 8 hours." Thus, he works and devotes nearly half of his time for his employer and the half for himself. The term **surplus value** refers to the "quantity of value" produced by the worker beyond the necessary labour time i.e. time needed to produce a value equivalent to his wage. "Since employers own the instruments of production, they can force workers to do extra hours of work and increase their profit by increasing exploitation". Thus, workers are compelled to work more in order that profit on the part of employers increases.

### 6. **Pauperization:**

"Poverty of the proletariat grows with increasing exploitation of labour." One capitalist makes many others poor and the wealth of the bourgeoisie is increased by large profits with corresponding increase in "the mass of poverty, of pressure, of slavery, of exploitation" of the proletariat. "It follows that in every mode of production which involves the exploitation of man by man the social product is so distributed that the majority of people i.e. labour are condemned to work hard and harder only to have bare necessities of life." On the other hand, the minority, the owners of means of production the property owners enjoy comfort, luxury and recreation. Society is divided into rich and poor. Thus, to Marx, poverty is the result of exploitation, not of scarcity. He strongly believed that the tendency to make profit at the cost of workers leads to poverty among the masses.

### 7. **Alienation:**

Karl Marx insists that the mode of capitalism produces alienation among the workers. He prefers to say that workers are forced to work under some inhuman conditions, further without any power or relation to other parts of the manufacturing process. Workers are neither given

any right over their tools with which they work or any freedom to determine their own pace, nor share in profit. Thus, major incentive to work is lost. This creates powerlessness, meaninglessness and sense of isolation which together produce the sense of indifference or loss of attachment to the work. Workers start feeling that work is something that is external to them. Gradually the workers feel their self is stranger to them as they do not know what to do when they do not find any meaning of their work.

#### **8. Class solidarity and antagonism:**

With the growth of class awareness, the crystallization of social relations into two groups gets set and the classes tend to become internally homogeneous and the class struggle becomes more intensified and violent. As the workers feel more closer to one another, they develop more strength or power. They become more aggressive and hostile to the other class. Workers do not like to integrate with the class of another as they have strong belief that the other class is exploiting them.

#### **9. Revolution:**

At the peak of the class war, a violent revolution breaks out which destroys the structure of capitalist society. This revolution is most likely to occur during an economic crisis which is a part of the recurring booms and recessions - characteristic of capitalism.

According to Marx, when the workers get sufficiently united, they can take over the means of production, remove the bourgeoisie from their positions and become owners on their own. "No doubt this whole process of change in turn will involve violent bloodshed but at last there will be only one class i.e. the class of proletariats and not of bourgeoisie. "Proletariats will then rule" as Marx has believed.

#### **10. The dictatorship of the proletariat:**

After the bloody revolution, capitalistic society ends with the increase of proletariats who will achieve ownership of the means of production. They will rule the economic system of society.

#### **11. Inauguration of the communist society:**

Abolition of private property will eliminate class system and thereby the causes of social conflict. All the members will unitedly hold the property and distribute the profits equally among themselves.

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### **6A.6 CRITICISM OF MARX'S THEORY:**

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1. Marx maintained that proletarian revolution would eventually result from the inability of the capitalist system (which organises relation of production) to adapt to technological advances in the forces of production. But this would not happen. In industrially advanced societies, capitalism is still flourishing. Revolution has not been the

case. Neither Russia nor China was highly industrialized at the time of their communist revolution. In fact, both were primarily agricultural societies.

2. Marx did not foresee the large-scale development of labour union in capitalist societies and therefore his conception of continual competition among individual workers for wages which provide minimum satisfaction did not come true.
3. As Marx had said there would be increased pauperization in industrialized capitalist societies, but on the contrary we witness fast growth of money and progress in these countries. We do not find poverty there.
4. Some predictions like increasing tendency towards automation of production and the concentration of capitalist control in fewer and larger organisations have come true.
5. Marx did not think about the rise of middle class. For him there were only two classes on extreme sides. This conception was false.
6. Marx misjudged the extent of alienation in the average worker. The great depth of alienation and frustration which Marx 'witnessed' among the workers of his day is not "typical" of today's capitalism or its worker who tends to identify increasingly with a number of "meaningful" groups religious, ethnic, occupational and local. This is not to deny the existence of alienation but to point out that alienation results more from the structure of bureaucracy and of mass society than from economic exploitation.
7. Marx also over emphasized the economic base of political power and ignored other important sources of power.
8. Marx's imagination of classless and stateless society is only an ideal; there can be no society without an authority structure or a regulatory mechanism. This invariably leads to a crystallization of social relations between the ruler and the ruled, with inherent possibilities of internal contradiction and conflict.
9. Marx's predictions about the downfall of capitalism have not come true. On the other hand, socialism flourished predominantly in peasant societies whereas capitalist societies show no sign of destructive class war.
10. Today's capitalism does not justify Marx's belief that class conflict is essentially revolutionary in character and that structural changes are always the product of violent upheavals; organized labour has been able to balance the power and brought profound structural changes without violent revolution.



11. The most distinct characteristic of modern capitalism has been the emergence of a large "contented and conservative" middleclass consisting of managerial professionals, supervisory and technical personnel.
12. Masses are not poor as Marx has predicted with the increased exploitation of labour.

If the value of surplus labour is the only basis of profit, there is no way to eliminate exploitation and profit accumulation. In fact, most socialist countries have a higher percentage of accumulation than do capitalist countries.

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## 6A.7 SUMMARY:

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Marx's theory of class is not a theory of stratification but a comprehensive theory of social change - a tool for the explanation of change in total societies. This, **T. B. Bottomore** a leading expert on Marxist sociology, considers to be a major contribution of Marx to sociological analysis.

Marx's theory of conflict is revived at present basically because it is in sharp contrast to functionalism which has dominated sociology and anthropology for the past 20 or 30 years. Where functionalism emphasized social harmony, Marxism emphasizes social conflict; where functionalism directs attention to the stability and persistence of social forms. Marxism is radically historical in its outlook and emphasizes the changing structure of society; where functionalism concentrates upon the regulation of social life by general values and norms, Marxism stresses the divergence of interests and values within each society and the role of force in maintaining, over a period of time, a given social order. The contrast between 'equilibrium' and 'conflict' models of society, which was stated forcefully by Dahrendorf in 1950 has not become common place.

Sociology of knowledge as a field of study was definitely improved with Marx's contention that ideological and other human thought forms prevailing at a given time and place depend upon the structure and composition of the society.

Analysis of alienation - Marx saw this economic alienation as the source of general alienation of the individual from society and moreover of the individual from himself. This concept has been greatly expanded in the contemporary radical writers and neo Marxists.

Marx has recognised the importance of economic structure though he has overemphasized it, nevertheless he focused attention on so far largely neglected factor in the study of society i.e. Economic system which was ignored so far in social sciences.

Karl Marx though most criticised led a train of other social thoughts.



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## **6A.8 QUESTIONS FOR SELF-STUDY:**

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1. Critically evaluate Marx's theory of class conflict.
2. Discuss Marx's theory of class struggle in detail.

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## **6A.9 REFERENCES:**

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## MARX'S CONCEPT OF ALIENATION

### Unit Structure

6B.0 Objectives

6B.1 Introduction

6B.2 Theory of Alienation

6B.3 Main causes of alienation

6B.4 Summary

6B.5 Questions

6B.6 References

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### 6B.0 OBJECTIVES :

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- To example the concept of alienation.
  - To study Marx theory of main causes of alienation.
  - To study Marx's analysis of alienation in capitalist society.
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### 6B.1 INTRODUCTION:

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Alienation means estrange, stranger as mentioned in the pocket oxford Dictionary. "Alienation" is a central concept in many of Marx's early writings. For Marx, man's own deed in government, wealth and culture "become to him an alien power standing over against his instead of being ruled by him". Man is thus divided within himself and from his follows never truly „at home“ never truly whole“ in his social life.

Marx borrowed the concept of alienation from Hegel. Hegel viewed alienation "wealth, state-power etc. as things estranged from man's nature; but Hegel used alienation only in thought form".

According to Marx the material conditions of life generate alienation. Institutions such as economic, political or religious bring about conditions of alienation. For Marx both religion and economic activity create a condition of alienation. Marx's focus was an economic alienation as found in the capitalist system as it affected every aspect of man's life.

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### 6B.2 THEORY OF ALIENATION:

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To Marx work - the production of goods and services - holds the key to human happiness "and fulfilment. Work is the most important, the primary human activity. As such, it can provide the means either to fulfill man's potential or to distort and pervert his nature and his relationships with others. In his early writings Marx developed the idea of "alienated" labour.

At its simplest, alienation means that man is cut off from his work; he is separated or different from his labour. As such, he is unable to find satisfaction and fulfilment in performing his labour or in the products of his labour.

Unable to express his true nature in his work, he is estranged from himself, he is a stranger to his self. Since work is a social activity, alienation from work also involves alienation from others. The individual is cut off from his fellow workers.

Marx believed that work provided the most important and vital means for man to fulfill his basic needs, his individuality and his humanity. By expressing his personality in the creation of a product, the worker can experience a deep satisfaction. In seeing his product used and appreciated by others, he satisfies their needs and thereby expresses his care and humanity for others. In a community where everyone works for himself as well as for others, work is a completely fulfilling activity. But for Marx, man's relationship to his work has been destructive both to the human spirit and to human relationships.

For Marx, the products of labour i.e. goods were started to be used as commodities to be exchanged for other goods, alienation originated. With the introduction of money, as a medium of exchange, they become commodities for buying and selling. The products of labour became the 'objects' in the market, no longer a means of fulfilling the needs of the individual and the community.

From an end in themselves, they become a means to an end, a means for acquiring the goods and services necessary for survival. Goods are no longer a part, of the individuals who produce them. In this way, the product has become an 'alien' object.

Alienation springs initially from the exchange of goods in some form of market system. From this, develops the idea and practice of private property, the individual ownership of the forces of production. Marx argues that although private property has caused the alienation, it is rather the consequence of latter. Once the products of labour are regarded as commodity objects, it is only a short step to the idea of private ownership. In capitalist economy, the ownership of the forces of production is concentrated in the hand of a small minority. Alienation is increased by the fact that workers do not own the goods they produce.

From the idea that the worker is alienated from the product of his labour, a number of consequences arise.

1. The worker becomes separate from the act of production since work is the primary human activity, he becomes alienated from himself.
2. When the worker is alienated from his self, he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies his self; he develops a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased.

3. Therefore, the worker feels himself comfortable when he is away from work. While at work he feels restless.
4. Work ceases to be an end in itself, a satisfaction and fulfilment of human needs. It simply becomes a means for him for survival. As a means to an end, work becomes boring or routinised and it cannot produce real fulfilment.
5. Alienated from the product of his work, the performance of his labour and from himself, the worker is also alienated from his fellow men. He does not take interest then in his fellow beings or in their problems. He works only for himself and for his family.

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### 6B.3 MAIN CAUSES OF ALIENATION:

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**Infrastructure:** Marx emphasized the economic system - the infrastructure as the foundation of society which ultimately shapes all other aspects of social life. For him, infrastructure can be divided into two parts: the **forces** of production and the **relations** of production. According to Marx, the forces of production i.e. means used for producing goods can change the relations of production i.e. relations between those who produce and those who own them. Under feudalism, an agrarian economy is the main force of production; land owners and landless labourers form two groups of relations. Under capitalism, the raw materials and machinery used for manufacturing are the major forces of production. The relations between those who own the capital and those who do not, are established in a capitalist economy. The capitalists own the forces of production (means of production) while workers simply own their labour, which as wage earners they sell to the capitalists or often on hire.

Marx argues that in capitalist economy, a small minority own the forces of production. The worker neither owns nor has any control over the goods he produces. Like his products he is reduced to the level of a commodity. A monetary value is placed on his work and the costs of labour are assessed in the same way as the costs of machinery and raw materials are assessed. Like the commodities he manufactures, the worker is at the mercy of market forces of the law of supply and demand. When the economic recession is there, many workers lose their job or they are given less wages. Only labour produces wealth yet workers receive wages, only a part of the wealth they create. The rest of the wealth goes in the pocket of the capitalists. This is exploitation of workers. Workers are always exploited due to the greed of the capitalist to maximize profits. Capitalism is based on self-interest. Both workers and capitalists work for self-gain.

Marx has given five characteristics of alienation. For him powerlessness, sense of isolation, meaninglessness, normlessness and self-estrangement are the five expressions of alienation.

#### 1. Powerlessness:

In the capitalistic mode of production, the earlier masters were reduced to simple workers. They were not allowed to produce

anything original or any work of their own creativity. The workers feel that whatever they are producing, they produce for somebody else. The worker is instructed in all details. His own workmanship is lost. The workers feel that he has lost all his power and freedom.

Further mechanization has also robbed all freshness and energies from them. The workers have to set their work according to the pace set by the machines. They lose all freedom and control over their own work. Specialisation of labour further produces routinization and monotony of work. This makes them feel unhappy. The workers thus lose the sense of power, feel powerless. Workers realize that they cannot influence their own destiny in the social structure to which they belong. Workers feel that they are at the mercy of others who decide what they should make and how to make them.

## **2. Sense of isolation:**

In the extreme division of labour, work has been divided into a number of different departments, each being specific and managed by specialists. The workers, as specialised groups, work in one department, they do not have any idea about the other departments. They are not provided with any additional informations regarding the working of the entire system. Thus, workers feel isolated and neglected. They start losing the feeling of attachment with work since they are concerned with only one aspect of the entire production and remain strangers to the other aspects of work.

## **3. Meaninglessness:**

In the capitalistic system entrepreneurs who hire the labour, own everything - machine, tools, raw materials, building etc. Thus, they have every right on the finished products produced by the workers. Workers do not receive anything extra apart from their wages, though they put hard labour to work. Thus, labour is external to the workers i.e. it does not belong to his essential being; i.e. his work, therefore he does not affirm himself, but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy. He does not find any sense of meaning at his work. When he does not get any extra benefit of his hard work, he loses all charm and purpose of his work. He experiences meaninglessness. He therefore only feels himself outside his work and in his work outside himself. He does not know why he is working. He cannot claim any ownership over his own product, he is separated from the product or processes of production. He cannot feel attached to them. Work becomes an instrument only to satisfy needs external to him. The worker feels that his labour benefits others.

This feeling of losing meaning or the aim of life through work is termed as meaninglessness.

## **4. Normlessness:**

Loss of meaning further leads to loss of values. The worker feels that the goals highly valued in society are very far for him. He gets confused. He loses the sense of achievement or direction to reach his goals. He cannot have any set pattern to follow. He feels rejected or

normless. He feels as if he is not appreciated by others for his chosen goals or means. What society considers important; the worker is gradually losing faith in them. Workers feel that they cannot achieve socially desirable goals and further that 'work' is no longer a goal in itself.

### 5. Self-estrangement :

The worker feels separated from himself, finally he does not feel concerned any more. It is an experience of loss of interest or involvement, in necessary activities like work, these activities are no longer goal but are simply endured as means to other needed things such as income. It is the loss of self or identity because what he actually wants to do, he cannot. The worker gets confused what he is or what he is doing. He becomes stranger to himself. The more the worker spends himself, the less he has of himself.

Marx's solution to the problem of alienated labour is a communist or socialist society in which the forces of production are communally owned and the specialized division of labour is abolished. He believed that capitalism contained the seeds of its own destruction. The concentration of alienated workers in large scale industrial enterprises would encourage an awareness of exploitation, of common interest and facilitate organization to overthrow the ruling capitalist class.

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## 6B.4 SUMMARY

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Karl Marx from Germany strongly protested the capitalism and pointed out its drawbacks. Especially the workers are greatly exploited and become the instruments for making the profit for the employers i.e. capitalists.

Workers feel deprived of their basic rights and thus unitedly fight against the capitalists, leading to take over the factories and to become the owner themselves. „Alienation“ is one of the most important aspect of capitalistic mode of production according to Karl Marx.

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## 6B.5 QUESTIONS

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1. Discuss Marx's concept of alienation. How has he related this concept to work or production in capitalist system?
2. What is historical materialism? Discuss Marx's theory of dialectical materialism in detail.
3. What is conflict? Discuss Marx's theory of class struggle in detail.

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## RALPH DAHRENDORF

### Unit Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Meaning of Conflict
- 7.3 Dahrendorf's conflicts theory
- 7.4 The concept of authority, according to Dahrendorf's conflict theory
- 7.5 Conclusion
- 7.7 Questions
- 7.8 References

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### 7.0 OBJECTIVES:

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- To learn about the Conflict Theory according to Ralf Dahrendorf
- To be familiar with the concept of group, conflict and change and discover their relationship.
- To understand Dahrendorf's idea of Authority
- To identify the criticism of Dahrendorf's Conflict Theory

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### 7.1 INTRODUCTION:

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The functional theorists believe that society is a system of interrelated parts held together by norms, values and a general consensus. Conflicts theorists believe that there is unequal distribution of resources and reward in society. According to Dahrendorf conflicts exist in every society. The authority structure is the primary source of conflict. It involves conflict between those who give order and those who take them.

Dahrendorf focused on positions and roles that people hold in society. He concentrated on the structure and various positions within society that have different amounts of authority. Authority does not reside in individual but in positions. He did not like to focus on the psychological or behavioural characteristics of individual who occupy the positions.

Dahrendorf was a critic of functionalism and called that it is ideological imaginary state. He attacked the functionalists for minimizing the role of power, authority and force in enforcing consensus and integration and for overlooking contradictions inherent in social structure.

While developing the dialectic model, Ralf Dahrendorf believes that class struggle is fundamental to social life and a deviation from normal

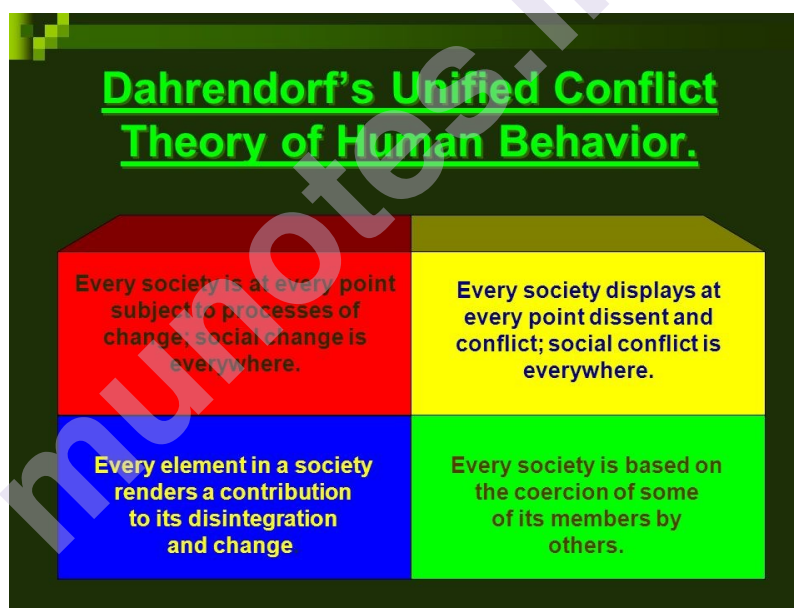
conditions. As Marx, Dahrendorf assumed that class struggle develops from the inherent contraindications that divide all societies into antagonistic groupings inside working institutions. He, like Marx, argues about two classes that are related yet have opposing impulses. In other words, society was divided into two classes: those who had authority and those who did not. The interests of these two organisations are fundamentally opposed. Those in positions of authority desire to keep the status quo, while those without seek to alter the structure of authority relationships. Conflicting classes are the name given to these groupings of people who have common interests.

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## 7.2 MEANING OF CONFLICT:

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The purposeful attempt to oppose, resist, or compel the will of another or others is referred to as 'conflict.' Conflict is caused by a conflict of interests. Class conflict can be defined as a struggle for values, or claims to Status, Power, and limited resources, in which the contending parties' goals include not only gaining the desired values, but also neutralising, injuring, or eliminating their opponents.




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## 7.3 DAHRENDORF'S CONFLICTS THEORY

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Dahrendorf felt that class conflict was caused by the separation of society into three groups: quasi groups, interest groups, and conflict groups.

**Quasi groups** are accumulations or groupings of people who are in the same place at the same time but have no ties to one another or to any organised group. For e.g: People waiting at a bus stop.

The quasi groups give rise to **interest groups**. If there is organisation among the members, they transform into interest groups; the fundamental distinction between quasi groups and interest groups is that interest groups can organise and have a sense of "belonging" or identity.

**Conflict groups** are formed when there is a fight between those in positions of power and authority and those who do not have power and authority. As a result, class conflict would refer to such struggles. It normally takes a quasi-group to convert into an interest group in order for it to gain authority and have its interests served.

According to Dahrendorf's conflicts is based on relations of authority. The authority structure leads to the emergence of interest group and increasing chances of conflicts. Authority attached to position is the main element of Dahrendorf's analysis.

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## 7.4 THE CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY, ACCORDING TO DAHRENDORF'S CONFLICT THEORY:

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The legitimate or socially acceptable use of power by one individual or a group over another is referred to as authority. There can be no authority without legitimacy. The only thing that divides authority from power is legitimacy. Power is defined as the power to force someone to do something against their will. Force or violence can be used to exercise power. In contrast, authority is based on the acceptance of subordinates and the ability to issue instructions by people in positions of power.

### Authority means

- a) Super ordination (high rank)
- b) Sub-ordination (low rank)

According to Dahrendorf, authority is based on positions rather than individuals. Subordination and authority are hence results of society's expectations. Those who occupy position of authority are expected to control subordinate. They dominate because of the expectation of those who surround them. Due to this a person in authority in one situation does not necessarily hold position of authority in other setting for e.g. My boss is to boss to me but everybody else boss is not a boss to me. Thus the authority of a one person is limited only in one setting. Similarly a person in a subordinate position in one group may not be in a subordinate position in another. Punishments or "sanctions" are imposed if the function of an obedient subordinate is not met. When several roles of authority are required to be played, there may be a conflict if these roles are required to be portrayed in different ways.

Since authority is legal, punishment are brought on those who do not obey. Society consist of many unit Dahrendorf called them **Imperatively Coordinated Association** controlled by a hierarchy of authority position. An individual can occupy a position of authority in one and a subordinate position in another. Every association involve the ruler and ruled. There are inherent possibilities of conflicts arising out of incompatible interest.

Conflict occurs among Imperatively Co-ordinated Associations (ICA) of society, according to Dahrendorf, over issues of power and authority. The

contradictory relationships that exist within the ICAs are social action units. Churches, chess clubs, and other ICAs fall within this category. Conflict can be both inter-group and intra-group in nature because each ICA is linked to other ICAs within the same culture. There is a hierarchy of power positions inside an ICA, and conflict emerges as a result of these positions. Because each society, regardless of its level of development, has multiple ICAs, each with its own set of competing relationships. All ICAs, when added together, contribute to societal conflicts. Through the mechanism of conflicting loyalties, these disputes can be suppressed or resolved, contributing to overall stability.

Those in position with authority and those in position of subordination hold curtailed interest that are contradictory in substance and directions. Even this interest are basically large scale phenomena. Within every association people in dominant position try to maintain the status quo while persons in subordinate positions seek change. A conflict of interest within each association is always hidden interest.

Dahrendorf called these unconscious role expectations as **"latent interests"**. Manifest interests are latent interests that have become conscious. He found the analysis of connection between latent and manifest interest as a theme of conflict theory. He saw conflict group emerging from many of the interest groups. He felt that conflict is only one part of social reality. Conflict also leads to change and development.

According to Dahrendorf, in class societies, there is a shift or evolution from 'quasi groups' with just underlying or 'latent interests' to a scenario where there are 'interest groups' with a common consciousness. Because they believe they are in a similar circumstance, their interests become apparent to all of them - that is, their interests become 'manifest.' As a result, while sharing latent interests is a necessary requirement, it is insufficient to achieve advancement, which necessitates community life and other parts of culture.

Thus, Dahrendorf claims that class conflict arises from the inherent patterns of authority relationships. According to Dahrendorf, conflict is not caused by economic relations between superiors and subordinates. Their key argument, though, is the power that one or more people have over others (s). While the boss-employee relationship is chaotic, similar tensions are bound to develop in any institution with authorities and subordinates, such as a hospital, university, or military battalion.

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## 7.5 CONCLUSION:

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Dahrendorf has made an important contribution to conflict theory through his ideas of class conflict. Class is explained in terms of authority. Class struggle revolves around the struggle for authority. Hence it is not possible to eliminate conflict altogether from society. Either latent or manifest conflict is always present in every society. Conflict can be regulated but it is difficult to resolve it permanently.

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## 7.6 CRITICISMS:

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- 1) Dahrendorf's conflict theory is not so innovative and sophisticated perspective. Very few sociologists have worked towards developing the conflict theory.
- 2) Dahrendorf's conflict theory is not so clear a reflection of Marx's ideas as he claimed.
- 3) His theory is more common with structural functionalism than Marxist theory.
- 4) Conflict theory takes only a macro sociological perspective. It does not help in the understanding of individual thoughts and actions.
- 5) Dahrendorf's theory fails to address much of social life. It explains only a portion of social life.

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## 7.7 QUESTIONS

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1. Explain Dahrendorf's Conflict Theory

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## 7.8 REFERENCES

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## HAROLD GARFINKEL : ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

### Unit Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Harold Garfinkel
- 8.3 Ethnomethodology Background
- 8.4 Meaning of Ethnomethodology
- 8.5 Concepts and Principles of Ethnomethodology
- 8.6 Emphasis on language
- 8.7 Experiments in ethnomethodology
  - 8.7.1 Breaching Experiments
  - 8.7.2 Conversation Analysis
- 8.8 Summary
- 8.9 Questions
- 8.10 References

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### 8.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To understand *ethnomethodology* and describe its purpose.
- To delineate the concepts and principles of ethnomethodology
- To describe *breaching experiments and conversation analysis* as method of experimentation in ethnomethodology

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION:

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Ethnomethodology is a branch of research concerned with the practical application of common sense reasoning by members of society in their daily lives. It was created by Harold Garfinkel in order to address some of Talcott Parsons' basic difficulties with his theory of action. Involved in Parsons' motivational approach to the problem of order (emphasising internalised values) is an analytically antecedent cognitive problem of order involving the process by which concrete acts are formed and rendered comprehensible in relation to their circumstances. The classic investigations of Garfinkel were aimed to highlight the common sense thinking strategies that actors use in this process. A wide range of social science subfields, including the study of language and social interaction, the inner workings of bureaucratic and people-processing institutions, and the formation of formal scientific knowledge, have been rejuvenated by recent ethnomethodology research

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## 8.2 HAROLD GARFINKEL

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Harold Garfinkel was born in Newark, New Jersey on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1917 and died in 2011. He belonged to a business family and took up business courses at the un-accredited University of Newark. He graduated from Columbia University in 1939. He was a sociologist, an ethnomethodologist and a Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Los Angeles. He was attracted to the theories especially phenomenologists and was greatly influenced by Talcott Parsons during his education career at Harvard University. Later he drew inspiration from Alfred Schutz and this was clearly reflected in his dissertation thesis. Therein is a detailed study on the different action-theoretical basic ideas and mental backgrounds of Talcott Parsons and Alfred Schütz.

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## 8.3 ETHNOMETHODOLOGY BACKGROUND

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The term ethnomethodology, a special field of research, was developed and established by Garfinkel. Ethnomethodology means a study of the method use by people. It is concerned with methods used by people to construct, account for and give meaning to their social world. It was systematized with the publication of Garfinkel's '**Studies in Ethno-methodology**' in 1967. Over the years, ethno-methodology has grown tremendously in several directions.

Ethnomethodology is a branch of sociology concerned with the formation and evolution of human social life. With his basic ethnomethodology approach, Harold Garfinkel formed a counteraction against structural functionalism. Ethnomethodology is concerned with a world that we don't generally appreciate.

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## 8.4 MEANING OF ETHNOMETHODOLOGY:

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By splitting the word 'ethnomethodology' into two components, the phrase can be explained.

1. The first is 'ethno,' which Garfinkel defines as society members' common sense knowledge and how single members are aware of it. The terms 'ethno' and 'ethnography' are used interchangeably. This refers to everyday human behaviour.
2. The second part, 'methodology,' refers to the methods utilised by society members during interactions that are the focus of research. 'Methods,' which describes the structure of actual action, is credited with the term 'methodology.' Ethnomethodology aims to reveal the knowledge and methods by which individuals of society achieve the quantity of daily behaviour.

"Ethnomethodological studies examine members' ways for making everyday actions visibly-rational and reportable-for-all-practical-purposes,



i.e., 'accountable,' as organisations of ordinary everyday activities." (Preface vii, Garfinkel, 1967). Common sense information is used to guide action and interaction. To be able to operate, this knowledge must be seen clearly and as a matter of course. One of the main goals of ethnomethodology is to disclose the knowledge and procedures that members of society utilise in their daily lives. "Their research is focused on discovering how members' actual, everyday activities are made up of methods for making practical actions, practical circumstances, common sense knowledge of social structures, and practical sociological reasoning analyzable; and discovering the formal properties of commonplace, practical common sense actions as ongoing accomplishments of those settings, 'from within' actual settings." (Garfinkel, 1967, pp. Preface vii-viii). Although early research in ethno-methodology is rarely used today, they tell us a good deal about ethno-methodological research. (Harold Garfinkel's Ethnomethodology. The Theory and Empiricism of Analyzing Everyday Structures in Society Term Paper, 2015- Louisa Jonuscheit <https://www.grin.com/document/309576>)

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## 8.5 CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES OF ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

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While ethnomethodology has yet to develop a unified body of concepts or propositions, it is necessary to understand two key concepts it has developed: They are: a) Reflexivity and b) Indexicality

- a) **Reflexivity:** Ritual activity is an example of reflexive action. It operates to maintain a certain vision of reality. When intense prayer and ritual activity do not bring forth desired reward, the devotee proclaims, "I did not pray hard enough", or the gods in their wisdom have a greater plan". Such behaviour is reflexive; it upholds or reinforces a belief, even in the face of evidence that the belief may be incorrect
- b) **Indexicality of Meaning:** The gestures, cues, words, and other information sent and received by interacting parties have meaning in a particular context. Without some knowledge of the context, it would lead to misinterpretation of the symbolic communication among interacting individuals. The fact of interactive life is denoted by the concept of indexicality. To say that an expression is indexical is to emphasize that the meaning of that expression is tied to a particular context.

With these two key concepts reflexivity and indexicality interactionists' concern - . With the process of symbolic communication is retained. Concern is with how actors gestures to create and sustain a "life world", "body of knowledge or "natural people attitude about what is real. The emphasis is not on the context of the life world", but on the methods and techniques that actors use to create, maintain, or even alter vision of reality.

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## 8.6 EMPHASIS ON LANGUAGE

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Harold Garfinkel :  
Ethnomethodology

Garfinkel saw ethnomethodology as a way to understand method people employ to make sense of their own world. He placed considerable emphasis on language through which reality construction can be done. In Garfinkel's terms: to do interaction is to tell interaction.

One of Garfinkel's key points about ethnomethods is that they are "reflexive account". Accounts are the ways in which actors explain specific situations. Accounting is the process by which people offer accounts in order to make sense of the world. Ethnomethodologists devote a lot of attention in analyzing people's accounts as well as to the way in which accounts are offered and accepted (or rejected) by others. This is one of the reasons the ethnomethodologists are preoccupied with analyzing conversation. To take an example when a student explains to her professor why she failed to take an examination, she is offering an account. The student trying to make sense out of an event for her professor.

Ethnomethodologists are interested in the nature of that account but more generally in the accounting practice by which the student offers the accounts and the professor accepts or rejects it. Ethnomethodologists do not judge the nature of the accounts but rather analyze them in terms of how they are concerned with the accounts action. They are concerned with the accounts as well as the methods needed by both speaker and listener to professor, understand and accept or reject accounts. A good deal of sociology (indeed all sciences) involves commonsense interpretations; ethnomethodologists can study the accounts of the sociologist in the same way that they can the lay person. Thus, everyday practices of sociologists and all scientists come under the scrutiny of the ethnomethodologists.

In trying to describe what people are doing, we alter the nature of what they are doing. This is as true for sociologists as it is for lay person.

Indeed, for Garfinkel, 'interacting individuals try to account for their action and represent it verbally to other. This is the primary way by which world is constructed. In his term the folk technique used by actors is verbal description. In this way people use their accounts to construct a sense of reality.

Thus, ethnomethodology as a distinctive theoretical perspective was firmly established by Harold Garfinkel by conducting pioneering inquiries. His work "Studies in Ethnomethodology establishes ethnomethodology as a field of inquiry which seeks to understand the methods employed by people to make sense out of their world. e places considerable emphasis on language as the vehicle by which this reality construction is done.

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## 8.7 EXPERIMENTS IN ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

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### 8.7.1 Breaching Experiments:

Garfinkel offered a number of examples of 'breaching experiments' to illustrate the basic principles of ethnomethodology. Lynce offers the following example of breaching derived from earlier work of Garfinkel.

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In the game of **Tic-Tac-Toe**, the well-known rule allows participants in the game to place a mark with each cells, but the rule have been breached in the above case as a mark has been places between two cells. If this occurs in real life game of Tic-Tac-Toe, the 2<sup>nd</sup> player would insist to correct the place. If correction is not done the 2<sup>nd</sup> player would try to explain the 1<sup>st</sup> player why he took such an extra ordinary action. The action of 2<sup>nd</sup> player would be studied by the ethnomethodologists to see how everyday world of Tic-Tac-Toe is reconstructed.

In another example, Garfinkel asked his students to spend 15 mints. to an hour in their homes imagining that they were borders and then acting on the basis of that assumption. They were asked to conduct themselves in polite manner. They were to avoid getting personal, to use formal address, to speak only when to.

In majority of the cases the family members were dumb fold and astonished by such behaviour. Many were charged for being mean, selfish, nasty and impolite. These reactions indicate how important it is that people act in accordance with common sense assumption about how they are supposed to behave.

Garfinkel was interested to know how family members tried common sense ways to cope with such a breach. They demanded explanation from the students for such a behavior. They also sort explanation from themselves in term of previously understood motives. For e.g. a student was thought to be behaving oddly because of overwork or fight with the fiancé. Such explanations are important for family members to understand the interaction.

If the student did not acknowledge the validity of such experiment, family members are likely to withdraw and isolate against the culprit. The family members felt that equilibrium. In the end when students explained the experiment to their families, in most cases the harmony was restored.

Breaching experiment are undertaken to show how people order their everyday lives. It is assumed that the way people handle this breach tells us much about how they handle their everyday lives. Although these experiments seem innocent, they often lead to highly emotional reaction.

The reactions to breaching are sometimes so extreme that one is cautioned about their use. Interested persons are strongly advised not to undertake any new breaching studies.

### 8.7.2 Conversation Analysis:

The term "conversation analysis" was coined to describe the ethnomethodological study of conversation in interaction pioneered by Harvey Sacks (1992) and others, and which arose out of Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodological perspective (1967). Others investigating interaction from non-ethnomethodological frameworks have also begun to use the term conversation analysis.

A conversation is a social process that requires particular characteristics in order for participants to recognise it as such and continue it. People exchange glances, nod their heads in agreement, ask and answer questions, and so on. If these techniques are not applied properly, the conversation will break down and be replaced with a different type of social setting.

Conversation analysts study how talk progresses in interaction, how it is facilitated or obstructed, how turns are taken in conversation, and how these processes affect and are shaped by social context. What individuals say is equally as essential as how they say it in conversation analysis. People's pauses in expressing themselves, as well as how or whether they interrupt themselves or others when speaking, are also significant. To understand about the social construction of law and punishment, conversation analysts can listen to recordings of court proceedings or legislative discussions. They might also look into more basic interactions, such as a talk between two people over tea, coffee or a drink.

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## 8.8 SUMMARY

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Harold Garfinkel developed ethnomethodology in the mid-1960s, a radical micro-level qualitative approach that drew on Georg Simmel's, Schutz and Parson's work and profited on symbolic interactionist advancements. The fieldworker's task, according to Garfinkel, is to comprehend the mechanisms through which observable and reportable reality is organised, produced, and managed by individuals. He claimed that both the researcher and the respondent have an impact on the data collection process. Unlike earlier methodological principles, ethnomethodologists do not believe that the researcher's impact on the data is damaging to the data's validity. Instead, ethnomethodologists feel that the researcher and the observed creating data together just exhibits typical social interaction processes. Garfinkel's breaching experiments in which an individual's social reality is momentarily interrupted and examined in order to disclose their underlying assumptions, beliefs, and understandings, were among his novel methodologies. Conversational and discourse analyses, which focus on patterns of speech and other forms of communication, such as gestures and expressions, that comprise social interaction, were also presented by ethnomethodologists. Garfinkel intended to avoid harmful common sense procedures that he claimed were inherent in traditional empirical research

approaches by adapting existing methodology to explore systematically the mechanisms that individuals utilise to construct their social reality.

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## 8.9 QUESTIONS

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1. Explain Ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel.

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## ERVING GOFFMAN: DRAMATURGY

### Unit Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Background
- 9.2 Dramaturgical perspective
- 9.3 Impression management
- 9.4 Deception and Manipulation in Impression Management
- 9.5 Front Stage
- 9.6 Backstage
- 9.7 Accounts: excuses and justification
- 9.8 Self-awareness, self-monitoring and self-Discourse
- 9.9 Summary
- 9.10 Questions
- 9.11 References

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### 9.0 OBJECTIVES:

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- To understand the concept of reality as social construct
- To use Goffman's dramaturgical perspective in analysing the social dynamics of self-presentation
- To examine the significance of impression management, back stage and front stage and its relevance in real life situation.

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### 9.1 BACKGROUND:

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Erving Goffman (1922–1982) was a well-known Canadian-American sociologist who influenced the formation of modern American sociology. Goffman was born in Manville, Alberta, Canada in June 1922. He graduated from the University of Toronto in 1945 and went to University of Chicago for graduate work in sociology and social Anthropology. He obtained his Master's degree in 1949 based on audience's response to them popular American radio Soap opera called "Big Sister". His Ph.D. thesis was based on fieldwork on the remote **Shetland** Island. Goffman's major contributions are as follows:

- Central Theories and Methods
- Nature of Society, Humans, and Change
- Dramaturgy
- Social Change
- Class, Gender and Race

Because of his several substantial and lasting contributions to the profession, he is considered by some to be the most influential sociologist of the twentieth century. He is widely recognised and admired for his contributions to the development of symbolic interaction theory and the dramaturgical perspective.

The most important work on the self in symbolic interactionism is **'Presentation of self in Everyday Life' (1959)**. Goffman's Conception of Self is deeply indebted to Mead's ideas. According to him the tension between all- too- human selves and our socialized selves is due to the difference between what people expect us to do and what we may not want to do spontaneously. As a result of his interest in performance, Goffman focused on dramaturgy.

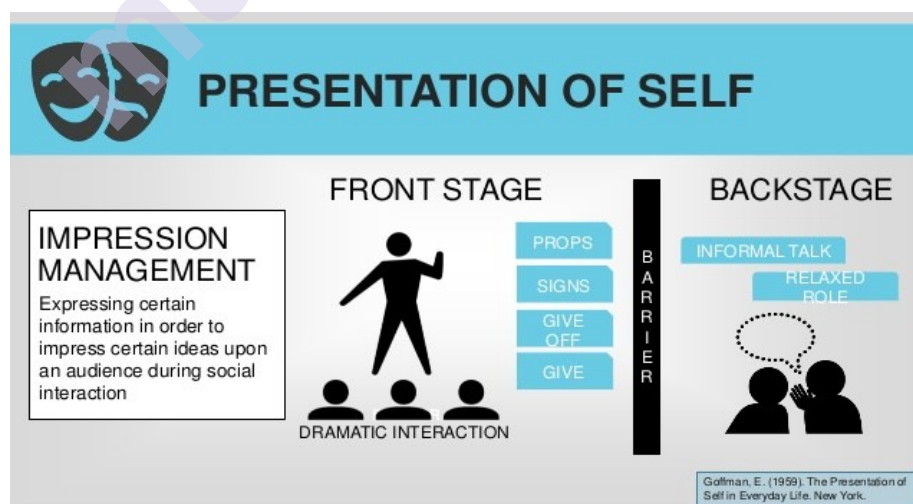
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## 9.2 DRAMATURGICAL PERSPECTIVE:

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Dramaturgical perspective was introduced in sociology in 1959 by Erving Goffman in his book 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'. He got this idea from theatre, and he uses it as a metaphor for how individuals behave in society and how they represent themselves. He employs a metaphor in which people are performers and society is a stage, and the individuals engage with one another, exchanging discourse while being directed by the rules and values that they adhere to as members of society.

Goffman's sense of self was shaped by his dramaturgical approach. He perceived self not as a possession of the actor but rather as the result of the product of the dramatic interaction between actor and audience. The self is a dramatic effect arising from a scene that is presented. The self is vulnerable to disruption during performance. Dramaturgy is concerned with the process by which such disturbance can be prevented and dealt with. He pointed out that most performances are successful.




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## 9.3 IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT:

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Impression management is central to the notion of Goffman. Goffman assumed that when individual interact, they want to present a certain sense



of self that will be accepted by others. The performers are continuously engaged in what is known as 'Impression Management,' which is when people strive to regulate what others think of them. They have specific objectives in mind for which they will act. In such a circumstance, the behaviour displayed will be acceptable to the person to whom we wish to make an impression. Impressions are generally needed to be managed within a particular context and setting, like the doctor, lawyer, magician etc. work in a particular setup. Our personal fronts such as age, sex, attire etc. are equally important in managing the impression. Thus, a young doctor needs to give older looks to his patients to develop trust.

For example, when we go for an interview, we will dress formally and be on our best behaviour. However, even actors are aware that members of the audience can disturb their performance. The actor hopes that the self that they present to the audience will be strong enough for audience to define actor as actors want. The actors also hope that this will cause audience to act as the actor want them to. Goffman characterised this central interest as “impression management”. It involves techniques actors use to maintain certain impressions in the face of problems they are likely to encounter and methods they use to cope with these problems.

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#### **9.4 DECEPTION AND MANIPULATION IN IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT:**

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Many individuals believe impression management is deceptive and manipulative when they first learn about it. It can, of course, be dishonest and unethical. This was recognised by Goffman (1959), who cautioned against manipulating perceptions in ways that are detrimental to others. Impression management, on the other hand, can be extremely advantageous since it allows us and others to act in socially proper and desirable ways. If you have any doubts, consider what would happen if we all did exactly what we wanted without concern for the sentiments of others. Without the common decency and politeness that most of us provide to others through impression management, social life would be impossible.

Goffman suggested that we all have control over the impressions we make. We're sometimes more successful than others at persuading others to accept the impressions of us that we want, but we're always managing how we appear. Consider all of the ways we manage our public image in our daily life:

- People dress differently at work, on dates, and when relaxing with friends.
- We might drink from a carton of juice if we are alone in our home, but not if we are visiting your girlfriend or boyfriend's family.
- We might confide in a close friend about our career skills, but not to a job interviewer.
- In a boring class, we gaze up at the professor and scribble in our notebook to create the idea that we taking notes.

- When speaking in front of a young child, we avoid using strong language or curse words.
- In a grocery store checkout line, the clerk says, "How are you today?" and we refuse to give an honest answer, such as "I have a horrible cold, I didn't sleep last night, I have two tests tomorrow, and I feel like —!"

In each of these situations, we control our image in order to achieve specific objectives, such as persuading others not to think of you as strange or unpleasant. We adopt roles as we engage with others.

Goffman suggested that the presentation of performance involves **front stage** and the **back stage** behaviour.

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## 9.5 FRONT STAGE:

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The front is the part of the performance that functions in general and fixed ways to define the situation for those who observe the performance for e.g., a surgeon generally requires an operating room a, Taxi driver a cab, an ice skater ice. The personal front consists of those items and equipment's that the audience identify with the performance and expect them to carry with them into the setting. A surgeon, for e.g. is expected to roam around in a medical gown, have certain instruments, and so on.

The front stage self is the version of ourselves that we are most likely to exhibit to the rest of the world. This is the person we exhibit when we leave our usual surroundings, when we interact with people we aren't yet at ease with, people we don't know. This is where our impression management comes into play; we typically display actions that are easily accepted by society's members. For example, when we meet our friend's parents for the first time, we want them to think of us as 'good company' for their children, so we may not mistreat or speak in the same tone as our friends, and we may not drink or smoke. Similarly, when we initially start working, we may want to make a good first impression on our coworkers and superiors, so we may act in accordance by excitedly completing any job that is assigned to us and not procrastinating.

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## 9.6 BACK STAGE

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is a place "where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course" it is the place in which the performer can relax, can drop their front, for e.g. speaking their lines, and step out of character.

As an illustration Goffman quotes Simon de Beauvoir on women's relationship in the absence of men. "With other women, a woman is behind the scenes; she is polishing her equipment, but not in battle ... She is lingering in dressing gown and slippers in the wings before making her appearance on the stage".

The backstage self is the version of ourselves that we be when we are in a comfortable atmosphere. We are accepted here; people recognise us for who we are, and there is no need to create an impression. When we're around our friends, for example, we're more relaxed, and we're more likely to use words that might otherwise be considered abusive. We're not on stage, therefore we're unnoticed and hence more relaxed. As a result, the stage becomes a metaphor for how we act in order to satisfy our desire to be accepted in society.

Maintaining the separation of front and back stage is important for impression management. This separation is found in all areas of social life for e.g., the bedroom and the bathrooms are the places from which the audience can be excluded.

When we go to a dramatic performance, we can see the actors performing on the stage. What we don't see is what goes on behind the scenes. Grips aren't seen working on the set's scenery, lighting, or other physical elements. We don't get to notice actors practising their lines and mannerisms. There are no directors directing the performers' performances. We also don't see an actor impersonating a religious leader shouting at stagehands or a mean-spirited character hugging an infant.

Everyday life takes place on both the front and back stages, just as it does in the theatre. Goffman used the example of restaurant servers to demonstrate his point. In a restaurant, frontstage behaviour is being courteous and attentive to customers, demonstrating concern for food quality, and guaranteeing sanitation. Backstage behavior, however, may include servers dropping food on the floor, picking it up, and putting it on a plate to be served to a diner on front stage. Servers on the back stage may sample diners' meals, remove mould from a slice of cheese before putting it on a plate to be served to a diner, or make fun of customers.

We must understand both the front stage and the back stage of the theatre to completely comprehend how social interaction works as drama. Backstage conduct allows people to securely express their emotions while without interfering with frontstage performances. Backstage activities can increase group unity (for example, among restaurant servers) and help them design an effective frontstage presentation. Competent communicators know how to keep backstage activities hidden from the audience so that the frontstage performance is not harmed. When a diner notices a server nibbling food from a customer's plate, the server loses credibility in his or her front-of-house position. Knowing that there is a backstage area where we can let our hair down and relax, on the other hand, enables us to cope with the often stressful front stage work we do.

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## 9.7 ACCOUNTS: EXCUSES & JUSTIFICATIONS

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Accounts are statements that people provide to explain a behaviour that was unanticipated or improper.

### Two types of accounts:

1. **Excuses:** attempt to lessen responsibility

2. **Justification:** an attempt to suggest that the behaviour had some positive outcome.

**Self Enhancement and Ingratiation:** Any attempt to inflate our credentials, statuses, etc.

Any attempt to alter the situation through

- a. flattery
- b. agree with others beyond your true beliefs
- c. do favours
- d. falsely present self to others in favourable light

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## 9.8 SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-MONITORING, AND SELF-DISCLOSURE:

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### Self-Awareness

When our attention is focussed on the self, we talk in terms of self-awareness. We do this within our private self--that part of the self in which attitudes cannot be perceived by others. The public self is that part which is given away by our mannerisms and behaviours. People differ to the degree to which they are self-aware, and the consequences that this entails.

### Self-Monitoring:

Once we become accomplished actors, we get better at self-monitoring so that we become more attuned to the reactions of others and adjust our behaviour accordingly. High self-monitors are very aware of their social situations, and pick up cues. Low self-monitors are the opposite.

### Self-Disclosure:

This is the means by which we can regulate what others know about us--Depth; Breadth; Intimacy.

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## 9.9 SUMMARY:

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However, Goffman's or even sociology's domain of dramaturgical theory and research is not exclusive. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have embraced the dramaturgical concept and have used it to drive their research. Later Goffman's interest in rituals brought him closer to the later work of Emile Durkheim. In Durkheim's sense social facts, he came to focus on rules and to see them as to external constraints on social behaviour.

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## 9.10 QUESTIONS

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1. Explain the Dramaturgy of Erving Goffman

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## 9.11 REFERENCES:

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## ANTONIO GRAMSCI: HEGEMONY AND THE RULING IDEAS

### Unit Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Biography
- 10.3 Social movements during Gramsci period
- 10.4 Hegemony
- 10.5 Political Activism
- 10.6 Role of Intellectuals
- 10.7 Gramsci vs Marx
- 10.8 Critics
- 10.9 Summary
- 10.10 Questions
- 10.11 References

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### 10.0 OBJECTIVES

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1. To learn about Antonio Gramsci
2. To understand his perspective, theories and concepts

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### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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There are some scholars whose work and contributions impacts the society massively one such scholar is Antonio Gramsci. His theory can be very much applied to the contemporary Globalized society too. Studying about Gramsci is important as he is one of the contemporary Neo Marxist thinker. This chapter would be useful whenever you are appearing any competitive exam related Sociology for your higher studies like entrance exams for Masters, MPhil or even National Eligibility Test, State Eligibility Test for Lectureship which you can appear after your Masters Degree. This topic or sociological theory in general would be even more useful if you are preparing later for PhD/ preparing for PhD entrance exam called as PET. Now, let us look into the details of Gramsci-

Antonio Gramsci was a prominent Italian Marxist who lived from the year 1891 to 1937. He was a famous theoretician, journalist, and philosopher. He was imprisoned during Mussolini's period for 11 years. During this time,

he wrote the book "Prison Notebooks," which had about 3,000 pages. After the war, these diaries were smuggled out of his jail and published in Italian. However, it was not until the 1970s that it was released in English. The Prison Notebooks' major goal was to establish a new Marxist theory that could be adapted to advanced capitalism's conditions.

The book explain and discusses about a wide range of topics like capitalism, economics, culture with historical developments. He also introduced the concept of Hegemony in the book to show how the ruling class gain power, manage it. Gramsci also shows how these concepts can be applied to church's, police, courts and even institutions like family, schools<sup>a1a</sup>.

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## 10.2 BIOGRAPHY

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The importance of little bit of biographical information is given so that we know how the life situation shaped his work, contribution as a scholar to the discipline. Gramsci own life was filled with hardships<sup>a2a</sup>. His biography reveals that he had hunch on his back of the body. Living in Southern Europe and later as a immigrant in Turin and later as a prisoner in jail his life was difficult.

Gramsci was born in Ales, Sardinia, a poor region of newly United Italy. His mother came from a wealthy Sardinian family. His father, on the other hand, was a lowly public servant from the mainland. His father was sentenced to jail for administrative incompetence. Gramsci was a well-read, clever, and academically successful student. He dropped out of university after four years, never to return. In 1913, he became a full-time journalist for the Italian Socialist Party's newspaper Avanti. In 1917, he became interested in political organising after being inspired by the Russian Revolution, and he was a key figure in the emergence of the Factory Councils Movement<sup>a3a</sup>.

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## 10.3 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS DURING GRAMSCI EXISTENCE

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During his times, Italy's economy experienced a catastrophe following the war. Soldiers were laid off, causing the unemployment rate to rise. As a result, the situation with inflation, debt, and unemployment was disorganised and was getting worse with passage of time. The working class was dissatisfied because they were finding it difficult to meet their basic needs. This contrasted with the capitalists, whose profits continued to rise. At the time, trade unions were seen to be the most effective means of dealing with capitalists. The Factory Councils movement began with this backdrop in mind.

To handle small scale concerns of arbitration and punishment, trade union members used to elect their own "internal commissions." These internal commissions were to be converted into Factory Councils, according to Gramsci. He argued that the first step toward the proletariat taking over capitalist control was for everyone in the corporation to vote for their



representatives. Second, he argued that the Council should be founded on the factory's division of labour. The Council's principal goal was to shift the mindset of the masses of workers towards leadership. The Council represented the proletariat. The failure of the Turin Councils movement, however, caused Gramsci to change his mind.

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## 10.4 HEGEMONY

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The main thesis of Hegemony is that human beings are not ruled by force alone but also ruled by ideas<sup>a4a</sup>. Gramsci agreed with Marx's conception of capitalism, that the conflict between the ruling class and the oppressed working class was the driving force behind society's progress. However, he did not agree with Marx's conventional conception of how the ruling class controlled.

Simply described, hegemony may be defined as "common sense," a cultural universe in which the prevailing ideology is practised and propagated. It began from social and class conflicts and is used to mould and control people's ideas. It is a collection of beliefs by which dominating organisations attempt to gain subordinate groups' agreement through their leadership. The capitalists were successful in persuading society's other classes to adopt their own moral, political, and cultural norms. The majority of a people simply agreed to go in the direction indicated by those in authority. This consent was not always peaceful, and it might include physical compulsion as well as intellectual, moral, and cultural persuasion.

Hegemony, according to Gramsci, can be seen as influencing whole system of values, attitudes, beliefs, and morality that served to maintain the status quo in power relations. With time these ideals and attitudes were so deeply internalised that it appears like as if it is the normal state of things: and as if the socialisation process had absorbed these notions in everyone.

Most Marxists agreed with basic split of society into a base, which reflected the economic structure, and a superstructure, which represented the institutions and beliefs widespread in society. Gramsci expanded on this by dividing the superstructure between institutions that were overtly coercive and institutions that were not. He considered the coercive ones as the state or political society, which consisted mostly of public institutions such as the government, police, armed forces, and judicial system. Others, like as churches, schools, labour unions, political parties, cultural organisations, clubs, and the family, which he referred to as civil society, were non-coercive. So, according to Gramsci, society is made up of two types of relationships: production relations (capital vs. labour) and the state or political society (coercive ties).

Because the reigning capitalist class's hegemony was founded on an ideological tie between the rulers and the ruled, a strategy was required to alter the status quo. Those who wanted to break the ideological nexus had to create a "counter-hegemony" against the ruling class's hegemony. In other words capitalists' tried to govern the economic and political realms, masses through an intellectual war.

Ideological hegemony means that the majority of the populace accepted the current state of affairs as the sole way to govern society. There may have been discontent with specific ways of functioning, and individuals sought reforms, but society's underlying ideas and value system were viewed as neutral or universally applicable in reference to the social class structure. The intellectuals of the ruling class, according to Gramsci, are immensely powerful and hence subsume the intellectuals of other social groupings. As a result, hegemony entails a condition/concept in which the ruling class obtains the permission of the subordinate classes in order to exercise dominance over them.

It was impossible for the proletariat to launch a revolution and change their situation as long as the bourgeoisie maintained their cultural monopoly. As a result, the proletariat would be unable to comprehend their issues and challenges. The bourgeoisie hegemony was so powerful that the proletariat mistakenly thought and embraced the bourgeoisie's goals as their own. As a result, the interests of the bourgeoisie were reflected throughout society. Gramsci was the first Marxist thinker to demonstrate how capitalists maintain rule via consent rather than force, and that a proletarian revolution could not occur until such a condition arose.

According to Gramsci, working class would have to present a counter-hegemony in order to triumph against the bourgeoisie. They'd have to put aside their narrow sectarian interests and strive for the sake of the entire society. This would only be achievable if working-class intellectuals collaborated actively. Gramsci saw the Party as playing a vital part in this battle because it would provide a counterculture through the goal of obtaining a foothold in civil society before state authority was forcibly taken.

Hegemony was not just a bourgeois strategy; in fact, the working class might build its own hegemony as a means of controlling the state. Nonetheless, Gramsci claimed that the only way to achieve this labour class domination is to consider the interests of other groups and social forces and find methods to combine them with one's own.

To attain hegemony, the working class would need to form a network of alliances with social minorities. These new coalitions would have to protect the movement's autonomy so that each organization may contribute its own unique contribution to the creation of a new socialist society.

Hegemony, thus according to Gramsci, also has to be continually readjusted and renegotiated and could not be taken for granted. Though periodically, an organic crisis may occur, in which the ruling group would begin to disintegrate. The subordinate class would then be able to start a movement seeking a change in the present order and attaining hegemony. However, if this chance is not grasped, the balance of power will shift back to the ruling class. This would aid it in reestablishing its control through a new alliance pattern.

## Check Your Progress

1. What is the title of the book which Gramsci wrote while he was in jail?

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2. Discuss the meaning of Ideological hegemony in few lines.

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## 10.5 POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Political activism is one approach to challenge the dominant hegemony. Gramsci, on the other hand, distinguished between two types of political methods for overthrowing the existing hegemony and establishing a socialist society. Political action was used to challenge the ruling hegemony. Gramsci distinguished between two types of political methods for overthrowing the prevailing hegemony and establishing a socialist society. He adapted the following terms of military science studies like:

- a) Manoeuvre or movement warfare:** In this method, missiles or weaponry may open up unexpected breaches in defences and troops can be swiftly moved from one location to another to crash through and conquer fortifications. The goal of the manoeuvre war is to win fast by attacking from the front. This type of action is specifically suggested for cultures with a centralised and dominant state authority that have struggled to establish a strong civil society hegemony (i.e. Bolshevik revolution, 1917).
- b) Positional warfare:** This refers to a situation in which the adversaries are evenly matched and must settle down to a protracted period of trench warfare. As a result, a war of position entails a long conflict, particularly among civil society organisations. Instead of relying just on political and economic competition, socialist forces would achieve influence via cultural and intellectual battle. This technique is particularly recommended for Western capitalism's liberal-democratic societies, which have weaker governments but greater hegemonies (i.e.: Italy).

As capitalism progressed, Gramsci believed that the battle of positions would become increasingly essential. In terms of the battle of movement, it should only be initiated after careful consideration and examination. This is due to the fact that it was too costly for the working class to launch. Gramsci's contribution to the construction of a philosophy that would integrate theory and practise was the establishment of working-class intellectuals actively engaged in practical life, helping to create a counter-hegemony that would weaken existing social relations.

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## 10.6 ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUALS

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Unlike Marx, Gramsci concentrated on the function of the superstructure. This reality is clearly stated in the definition of the intellectual's position in society. According to Gramsci, all humans are born intellectuals. However, each individual has a unique job and purpose in society. Each person makes a contribution to society based on his or her job and function.

The intellectual, according to Gramsci, played a critical part in the creation of a counter-hegemony. He believed that if capitalism was to be replaced by socialism, the masses' participation would be essential. A small group of elites representing the working class could not bring about socialism. It has to be the labourers who were aware of their actions. As a result, for Gramsci, public consciousness was crucial, and the intellectual's function was crucial.

Different intellectuals have generated the beliefs that have shaped civilizations throughout history; each class develops one or more intellectual groupings. As a result, Gramsci proposed that if the working class wanted to achieve hegemony, it would have to produce its own intellectuals in order to construct a new ideology. He distinguished between traditional and organic thinkers. Artists, authors, and philosophers were referred to as traditional intellectuals. This group claimed they were unaffected by social classes. They were associated with historically falling social classes. They professed to have an ideology, however, it was to hide the reality that they were old or obsolete.

They loved to think of themselves as autonomous from governing organisations, although this was frequently a fantasy and an illusion. They were known for being conservative and helping the ruling class in society. Gramsci also defined the organic intellectual's role. In every sphere-political, social, and economic-organic intellectuals represented and worked for their class's collective consciousness and ambitions. The power of the organic intellectual was demonstrated by the organisation to which he belonged, as well as the organization's link and degree of closeness to the class to which it belonged. This was the social group that formed naturally with the ruling elite, the dominating social group. It was crucial for Gramsci to perceive them for what they were.

It was critical, according to Gramsci, for the working class to generate its own organic intellectuals. Only then it will be able to succeed in its endeavours. It had to conquer conventional intellectuals as well as produce its own organic intellectuals. The organic intellectual's key function for

Gramsci was to fulfil the working classes' ambitions, capabilities, and aspirations, which were already present in them. As a result, the organic intellectuals' job was dialectic: they would take material from the working class while imparting historical knowledge to it. The Party, according to Gramsci, was the intellectuals' organisation, and it was most closely related to its class. The party was where the people's collective will took shape and manifested itself.

Gramsci believed that the proletariat had a harder time developing organic intellectuals than the bourgeoisie. He even said that in order to produce intellectuals, the working class would have to get control from the state. Gramsci wished to foster the development of **organic intellectuals** among the working class, as well as enlist them with the help of more conventional intellectuals in furthering the cause of the working class revolution. He expressed this thought through a publication called *L'Ordine Nuovo* (New Order), which was labelled "a weekly assessment of socialist culture." This publication coincided with Turin's massive spontaneous outburst of industrial and political agitation in 1919. It reflected events that rocked the fundamental foundations of the industrial world.

Gramsci did not focus much on the economic substructure. Rather he focused on the means by which the proletariat could gain an understanding of the socio economic relations in a capitalist society, so as to overthrow it through political means. He analyzed the base through the superstructure and is one of the Marxist thinkers who constantly used the dialectical approach.

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## 10.7 MARX VS GRAMSCI

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Gramsci's theory has had a significant impact on sociology. His hypothesis has been praised by a number of sociologists. His thought process resulted in the formation of a critical sociology of culture and the politicisation of culture. Yet he addressed two major flaws in Marx's original method. The first was a high level of dependence on the potential of a spontaneous eruption of revolutionary consciousness among the working class; the second was a high degree of reliance on the prospect of a spontaneous outburst of revolutionary awareness among the masses. As a result, Gramsci concentrated on the everyday 'common sense' institutions that operate to maintain class dominance.

Antonio Gramsci, was also instrumental in the move from economic determinism to more contemporary Marxist ideas. Marxists who are "deterministic, fatalistic, and mechanistic," as Gramsci put it, they were "deterministic, fatalistic, and mechanistic." In reality, he produced an essay called "The Revolution Against 'Capital,'" in which he praised the "resurrection of political will against the economic determinism of those who limited Marxism to the historical principles of Marx's most famous work [Capital]." Despite the fact that he acknowledged historical regularities, he rejected the concept of historical processes that were automatic or unavoidable. As a result, the people were required to take action in order to bring about a social revolution.

However, before the masses could act, they needed to be aware of their condition and the nature of the system in which they lived. Gramsci, for example, understood the importance of structural elements, particularly the economics, but he did not feel that these structural reasons would lead to the cause of mass revolution.

Once the people have been persuaded by these concepts, they will act in ways that will lead to social upheaval. Gramsci, like Lukács, was interested in communal ideas rather than social institutions such as the economy, and both adhered to conventional Marxist theory.

Hegemony as a concept of Gramsci's also expresses the Hegelianism thoughts, whereby he notes "The historical-philosophical idea of 'hegemony' is the basic component of the most current philosophy of praxis [the connection between thinking and action]. Gramsci defines hegemony as the ruling class's exercise of cultural leadership. He contrasts hegemony with coercion "executed through legislative or executive authorities, or manifested through police action." Gramsci advocated "hegemony" and cultural leadership, while economic Marxists emphasised the economics and the coercive characteristics of state dominance. Gramsci sought to discover how certain intellectuals working for the capitalists were able to attain cultural leadership and people's approval in the analysis of capitalism.

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## 10.8 CRITICISM ON GRAMSCI CONCEPTS

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Critics point out that Gramsci's hegemony idea is a uniform, rigid, and abstract structure. His views on the role of intellectuals in society are elitist, and his entire philosophy is far too political and partial. Gramsci's thesis can be also seen as lacking empirical evidence. It leaves no place for audience research, polls, or anything directly connected to people and their behaviour.

Gramsci's theories, according to some sociologists, are reductionist because of his Marxist background. This kind of thought may also be found in the Frankfurt School's ideas and in Althusser's work. It tends to simplify the relationship between people and their own culture since it is a class-based study.

Critics also point out that people needed to construct a revolutionary ideology on their own, but they couldn't do it alone. Gramsci operated under an elitist model in which intellectuals developed ideas, which were then extended to the people and put into effect by them. Such concepts could not be generated by the masses, and experienced.

## Check Your Progress

1. What is your understanding of Gramsci hegemony explain in few lines.

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2. Discuss one criticism of Gramsci work

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## 10.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter we dealt with understanding Italian Marxist Gramsci work and contribution. Hegemony in simple words is control, it is a kind of control through consent. We are learnt about the role of Intellectuals who influence the society. The notion of hegemony not only helps us comprehend domination inside capitalism, but it also helps us grasp Gramsci's views on revolution. That is, it is not enough to acquire control of the economy and the governmental machinery through revolution; cultural leadership over the rest of society is also required. Gramsci envisions communist intellectuals and a communist party playing a crucial role in this.

## 10.10 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Hegemony concept given by Gramsci
2. Discuss the Role of Intellectuals in Gramsci theory
3. Explain Political Activism of Gramsci



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## 10.11 REFERENCES

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