PG SO S1-02 (DSC)

TWO YEAR MASTER'S DEGREE COURSE

(CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

SEMESTER - I

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND THEORIES

SOCIOLOGY

Surya Kumar Bhuyan School of Social Sciences

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND THEORIES

FIRST SEMESTER

DETAILED SYLLABUS

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COURSE INTRODUCTION:

Theoretical Perspectives, as we all know, is the most significant component of any discipline.Keeping this in mind, this course intends to familiarize the learners with some of the important Sociological Perspectives and Theories. In this Course, we will introduce the learners to the theoretical contributions of the founding figures of Sociology and also provide them brief ideas on some of the basic theoretical approaches/perspectives in Sociology.

The course comprises of 15 units. **Unit 1** describes the contribution of enlightenment and industrial revolution to the growth of sociology as a discipline. **Unit 2** discusses the Contributions of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy to the groth of sociology. It also talks in brief about the social forces behind the development of sociology and also about some of its pioneering scholars. **Unit 3** discusses the Functionalist Perspective in Sociology. It explains the approaches provided by different Functionalist Thinkers to study society. **Unit 4** explains the Structuralists approach to understand society by illustrating the works of Radcliffe Brown and Levis Strauss. It also provides the learners basic idea about Post-Structuralism and Structuration. **Unit 5** explains the perspectives of the thinkers belonging to the Conflict School of Thought like Georg Simmel, Lewis Coser, Ralf Dahrendorf, and Randall Collins. **Unit 6** discusses the perspectives usually referred to as micro level perspectives like Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology, which focus on everyday life and actions of people. **Unit 7** Similar to Unit 6, this unit also talks about another such perspective i.e Phenomenology. **Unit 8** talks about the contributions of Emile Durkheim as one of the founding fathers of sociology. **Unit 9** discusses the contribution of Max Weber to Sociological Theories. **Unit 10** explains the theories of Karl Marx**. Unit 11** discusses the contribution of the thinkers belonging to Frankfurt School of Thought to Sociology. **Unit 12** introduces the learners to some of the important theories and concepts propounded by Antonio Gramsci. **Unit 13** discusses about the important concepts of Louis Althusser. **Unit 14** discusses the ideas propounded by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. **Unit 15** explains some of the important concepts provided by Pierre Bourdieu.

While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in “LET US KNOW” along with the text. We have kept “CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. The answers to these questions are given at the end of the unit. We strongly advise that you answer the questions immediately after you finish reading the section in which these questions occur. We have also included a few books in the “FURTHER READING” which will be helpful for your further consultation. The books referred during the preparation of the units have been added at the end of each Block. However, this SLM is not an end in itself and the learners are strongly advised to consult the books and other resources recommended for reading.

UNIT 1: EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES I

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Meaning of Theory

1.4 Meaning of Sociological Theory

1.5 Development of Sociological Theory in the Context of Enlightenment.

1.5.1 The Enlightenment

1.6 The Industrial Revolution

1.6.1 Chief Features of Industrial Revolution

1.6.2 Impact of Industrial Revolution on Society

1.7 Let Us Sum up

1.8 Further Reading

1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.10 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand the meaning of theory
- explain the aspects of sociological theory
- discuss the development of sociological theory
- describe the enlightenment
- describe the industrial revolution and its impact on society.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

We begin this course firstly with the discussion on emergence of Sociological theories where we shall try to address how the enlightenment and industrial revolution contributed to the emergence of sociology as a discipline. But before going to that, we shall first try to understand the

meaning of theory and what is meant by sociological theory. From these basic questions, we will go on to examine the importance of theory to sociology as a discipline and, importantly, how sociological theories have developed and relate to the work that they do in describing, defining and explaining the social and cultural worlds that we live in. We know that, sociology emerged as a separate academic discipline in the nineteenth century but sociological thought has its roots in much earlier periods. New ways of thinking about societies began to emerge during the Enlightenment period. A new, critical approach to intellectual inquiry developed which provided the foundations for the development of specific scientific approaches to the understanding of social processes. In this unit, we shall look specifically at the Enlightenment and its development and industrial revolution in the early nineteenth century and how they have paved the way for development of Sociology as a separate discipline.

1.3 MEANING OF THEORY

A theory is a set of relationship between two or more concept*s*. In other words, a theory is the description of why or how a phenomenon occurs. It is a set of inter-related concepts and ideas which have been scientifically proved and combined to clarify, and expand our understanding of people, their behaviours, and their societies. Without theory, science would be fruitless.

Theories are always abstract and not content or topic specific. Theories can be modifying in the extent to which they have been conceptually developed and empirically proved; however, “validity” is an important feature of a theory. As Stephen Turner has noted in his chapter on “Theory Development,” social science theories are better understood as models that work in a limited range of settings, rather than laws of science which hold and apply universally.

Theory is very important because it makes generalisations about observations and consists of an interrelated, coherent set of ideas and models. Typically, theories are both descriptive and explanatory. That is, a theory should have the capacity to describe a set of observed phenomena and to explain their occurrence, usually causally.

1.4 MEANING OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Sociological theory is a set of assumptions, assertions, and propositions, organized in the form of an explanation or interpretation, of the nature, form, or content of social action.

Sociological theory is closely related to other forms of social theory. As we will see, sociology as an academic discipline emerged in the later part of the nineteenth century. From the beginning, it attempted to define itself against other forms of explanation, including other types of social theory. However, as we will see throughout this course, sociological theory has been and continues to be influenced by the numerous strands of thought in other social and human sciences. It responds, as it always has done, to profound, on-going transformations in the social, political and economic arrangements of the world.

Sociology as a discipline emerged out of a series of debates that began during the period of the Enlightenment between philosophers, scientists and other intellectuals about the origins and nature of human societies. The important thing for us to grasp here is that sociological thinking emerged out of a series of debates. Questions began to be asked during the period of the Enlightenment about what societies are and how they function; about the relationship between individuals and societies, and about social change. However, these questions did not immediately lead to a single set of conclusions. Rather, different perspectives and different ideas emerged in response to these questions and these were often vigorously debated between people holding competing views. This remains the case today and it is important to grasp this point as it allows us to recognise that the systematic attempt to answer complex questions is bound to lead to different solutions, in other words to different theories of what societies are and how they work.

1.5 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY IN THE CONTEXT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

To understand the root of emergence of sociological theory we must know the relationship between society and ideas. There has always been a

link and a connection between the social conditions of a period and the ideas which arise from and become dominant in that period. The intellectual forces are the important factors that played a central role in shaping sociological theory. Hence we begin with the enlightenment and its influences on the development of sociological theory.

1.5.1 The Enlightenment

Enlightenment was a philosophical movement that took place primarily in Europe and, later, in North America, during the late 17thand early 18thcenturies. It was a period of remarkable intellectual development and change in philosophical thought. The fundamental features of the Enlightenment include the rise of certain concepts such as **scientific method, reason and liberty**. It was the era when some of the traditional ideas and beliefs related to social life were overthrown and replaced. The most prominent thinkers associated with the Enlightenment were the French philosophers Charles Montesquieu (1689 – 1755) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778).The Enlightenment is the most appropriate form of departure in the origins of sociological theories. It brings the opportunity if one is interested in the study of origins of the sociological theory, for various reasons.

Firstly, the thinkers of enlightenment gave more emphasis on **scientific approach** by using the methods of the natural sciences. They deliberately applied scientific principles to analyse and study the human beings, their nature and society. Moreover, the Enlightenment thinkers wanted their ideas to be derived from the real world and wanted them to be useful to the social world, especially in the critical analysis.

Secondly, the thinkers of enlightenment justified **reason** as a measure to judge social institutions. They believed that human beings are typically rational and this rationality can lead them to freedom of thought and action. Once the human beings understood how the social world worked, the Enlightenment thinkers could work for the creation of a better and more rational world.

Thirdly, with an emphasis on reason, the Enlightenment philosophers were inclined towards liberty and rejected beliefs in traditional authority. When these thinkers studied traditional systems and value 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 thinkers of Enlightenment was to overcome these irrational systems.

Apart from all these, Enlightenment thinking was based on certain principles. According to Hamilton, Enlightenment thinking took place within a broad paradigm in which certain basic principles were accepted. A paradigm is a set of interconnected ideas, values, principles and facts within which coherent theories(attempts to describe and to explain phenomena) are developed. Hamilton argues that key aspects of the Enlightenment paradigm included:

- **Reason:** the fundamental importance of reason and rationality as ways of organising knowledge were stressed.
- **Empiricism:** this is the idea that all thought and knowledge about the natural and social world is based on what we can apprehend through our senses. Much Enlightenment thought relied upon using both rational and empirical methods.
- **Science**: this is the idea that the only way to expand human knowledge is through those methods (experimental, etc.) devised during the 'scientific revolution' of the seventeenth century.
- **Universalism:** the idea that reason and science are applicable in all circumstances and that they can provide explanations for all phenomena in all circumstances. Science in particular was thought to uncover universal laws.
- **Progress:** this is a key idea of the Enlightenment. Here, it was believed that human beings could improve their natural and social conditions through the application of reason and of science. The result would be an ever-increasing level of happiness and well-being.

- **Individualism:** the idea that the individual is paramount and that his or her individual reason cannot be subject to a higher (possibly irrational) authority (such as the Church) or traditional knowledge.
- **Toleration:** the idea that all human beings are essentially the same and that the beliefs of other cultures or 'races' are not necessarily inferior to those of European Christianity.
- **Freedom:** opposition to the traditional constraints on belief,expression, trade, social interaction and so forth.
- **Secularism**: another key aspect of Enlightenment thought, this is opposition to traditional religious knowledge and to metaphysical speculation.
- **Anti-clericalism:** opposition to the Church, organised religion, superstition and religious persecution.
- **Enthusiasm for technological and medical progress:**an enormous enthusiasm for scientific discovery and its practical application in the fields of technology and medicine.
- **A desire for political change and reform:** Enlightenment thinkers were not democrats, but they wished to see constitutional and legal reforms in the states in which they lived.
- **A belief in the pre-eminence of empirical, materialist knowledge:** a desire to uncover the real reasons for the ways that societies operate; the model used was derived from the natural sciences.

It is clear from the above that during the Enlightenment period, there was a drastic change in the ways of thinking about the world or society. The new philosophies of the enlightenment thinkers established the human being at the centre of the universe, and rationality or logic as the central features of human being. The ability to think rationally and critically transformed the human being into the inventor and the user of all knowledge. Moreover,the thinkers of Enlightenment were influenced by two intellectual currents – the prevailing philosophy and science. In other words, they tried to combine empirical research with reason and science was their

primary model. Hence, we see the emergence of the application of the scientific method. This new way of thinking which emerged during enlightment period contributed immensely to the Sociological body of knowledge. It was since the period of enlightment that several thinkers began to study society and social phenomenas scientifically and developed theories and concepts which forms the core of Sociology.

1.6 THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Industrial Revolution began in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It brought tremendous changes in the life of people. One of the major aspects of Industrial Revolution was the systematic application of science and technology to industrial production, particularly the invention of new machines.There were a number of changes that took place in the production system which brought about great changes in the social and economic life of the people first in England, then in other countries of Europe and later in other continents.

During Industrial Revolution, new tools, machines and techniques were invented which could produce goods on a large-scale and gave rise to the factory system and mass manufacture of goods. The factories were set up in urban areas and they were filled by the workers who migrated from the rural areas and came to the cities in search of work.Hence, a new change in the structure of economy from feudal to capitalist system of production developed. A class of capitalists emerged which controlled the mode of production in factory system.

There were some outstanding mechanical inventions that took place during the phase of Industrial Revolution. For example, James Hargreaves made **'spinning jenny'** in 1764, and Richard Arkwright introduced **'water-frame'** in 1768. Thereafter, some other inventions came in quick succession such as **'mule spinner'** by Crompton and '**power-loom'** by Cartwright. The invention of '**steam engine'** also enabled people to drive the machine by power. Thus, all these along with some other inventions contributed to the industrial development of European society.

1.6.1 Chief Features of Industrial Revolution

The chief features of Industrial Revolution may be summed up as follows:

- A series of mechanical inventions were made by the English scientists.
- The factories started to produce goods with the help of machines run by mechanical power such as steam, oil and electricity.
- The setting up of factory required huge amount of capital which gave birth to two classes in industry, namely, capitalist and labour.
- Mass scale of production and standardisation of goods could be possible by the use of newly invented machines.
- The factory system provided employment to a large number of people which also gave rise to some labour problems.

1.6.2 Impact of Industrial Revolution

With changes in the form of economy, society had confronted certain new and radical changes. A complex and new form of capitalism had emerged. Hence, several emerging economic institutions such as bank, insurance companies, and finance corporations came into being and a new class of workers, managers and capitalists emerged in society. Moreover, due to Industrial Revolution society had seen several changes, which include:

- **Economic Changes**

  Industrial Revolution brought about the following economic changes:

  - The economy transformed from agricultural to industrial and machines replaced people in methods of production.
  - It led to the rise of industrial capitalism under which there were two classes of people, namely, capitalist and workers.

- As factory became the centre of production, large employment could be possible.
- The women and the children also got involved as labourers in the production system.
- Workers became much conscious to protect their rights and interests which gave birth to the concept of *trade union.*
- It brought a positive impact on the standard of living of the people because factories produced better quality goods at cheaper rates for the consumption of the people.

➢ **Social Changes**

- It led to the migration from villages to towns which caused the expansion of cities and urbanisation. Thus, certain social problems increased such as migration, housing problems, poor sanitisation, slums etc.
- Two new classes arose, namely, capitalist and working class due to the new industrial economy i.e. capitalism also caused a huge gap between the rich and the poor.
- The concept of Colonialism had begun and started to exploit the poor and under developed countries.
- The workers were paid lower wages and were forced to work under certain unfavourable working conditions. They were even forced to work for long hours.
- The structure of the family had changed from joint family to nuclear family. People's bond with the village, land and family was broken. This led to the rise of individualism.

➢ **Political Changes**

- The developed western countries like France, Germany, England, Italy, Portugal etc., started to rule all over the world and dominated politically, economically, and socially.

- Colonialism was established to search raw materials and new markets and it changed the world's political structure.
- Some capitalist nations became imperialist nations, extending their rule over other countries or territories, which led directly to World War I and World War II.
- A laissez-faire policy or free market economy took the place of mercantilism where the government did not have any interference.

During the era of Industrial Revolution, the working class in the new industrial society was living in very poor and unhygienic conditions. The rise of population led to increase in the no of cities and urban areas where the socio-economic disparities were very high; the workers were involved in repetitive and boring work, where they could not enjoy their work (*Alienation* of Work, in Marxist term). Moreover, the conservative and radical thinkers were also influenced by these changes. The conservative thinkers feared that such conditions would lead to social disorder whereas the radical thinkers like Engels felt that such condition would bring a new social transformation. Though the different values of judgement were found the social thinkers of that period agreed that the Industrial Revolution had epoch-making impact on society.

Thus we may conclude by saying that the changes broguht by industrial revolution arrested the interest of the social thinkers and motivated them to examine and anlyse these changes in a scientifice way. This in turn greatly contributed to the growth of sociology as a discipline.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is theory?

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Q 2: What is sociological theory?

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Q 3: What do you mean by enlightenment?

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Q 4: What are the fundamental features of enlightenment?

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Q 5: Where and when did Industrial Revolution first take place?

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Q 6: What were the major inventions of Industrial Revolution?

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

- The development of theories in sociology has been going on since the earliest times and it still continues. The enlightenment and the industrial revolution had a great influence on the development of sociological theory.
- Sociological theory emerges from a system of thinking that link concepts, often new concepts, with evidence or data to create a broader understanding and explanation of the society.
- The Enlightenment period began in the early years of the eighteenth century with the emergence of European intellectuals. During this period a new framework of ideas about human beings and their societies was developed in the work of a wide variety of thinkers.
- The Enlightenment is also known as “Intellectual Movement”whose purpose was to alter and modify society with advanced knowledge. It

promoted science and intellectual interchange and opposed superstition. They believed that human reason could be used to beat ignorance, superstition, and coercion and to build a better society.

- The era of Enlightenment was also known as the "Rise of Age of Reason" where religion was challenged by science and which aimed to reform society with scientific knowledge and logical thinking.
- Industrial Revolution took place in England in the late 18th and early 19thcenturies and later spread to other countries of the world. It is the era where the use of science and technology could be seen. During this period, many changes took take place in industrial system.
- Industrial Revolution led to the transformation of feudal society into industrial society. The emphasis was given on large scale production because of increasing demand which also brought urbanisation and industrialisation.
- Urbanisation and industrialisation brought a new economic structure i.e. **Capitalism** where there were two classes namely, the capitalist and the working class. The capitalist class owned the mode of production. Thus, it led to the huge gap between the rich and poor.
- The conservative and radical thinkers were also influenced by these changes. The conservative thinkers thought these changes would bring social disorder in the society whereas the radical thinkers welcomed these changes for social reformation.

  Thus the changes brought by industrial revolution provoked different thinkers and scholars to scientifically examine and analyse these changes and its impact in society. This in turn contributed immensely to the Sociological body of knowledge and growth of Sociology.



1.8 FURTHER READING

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1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Theory is a set of inter-related concepts and ideas which have been scientifically proved and combined to glorify, enlarge, clarify, and expand our understanding of people, their behaviours, and their societies.

Ans to Q No 2: Sociological theory is a set of assumptions, assertions, and propositions, organized in the form of an explanation or interpretation, of the nature, form, or content of social action.

Ans to Q No 3: 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.

Ans to Q No 4: Scientific method, reason and liberty are the fundamental features of enlightenment.

Ans to Q No 5: The Industrial Revolution took place in England during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Ans to Q No 6: The major inventions of Industrial Revolution were spinning jenny in 1764, water-frame in 1768, mulespinner, power-loom, steam engine etc.



1.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Why is theory necessary for sociology?

Q 2: What is Industrial Revolution?

Q 3: What are the key features of Enlightenment?

Q 4: What were the principles of Enlightenment?

B) Long Questions (Answer each question about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Explain the influence of Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution on society.

Q 2: What are the chief features of Industrial Revolution?

Q 3: Discuss the impact of Industrial Revolution on society.

Q 4: Explain how Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution are responsible for the development of sociological theory?

Q 5: Discuss the political and social changes brought by industrial revolution.

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UNIT 2: EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY-II

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Ancient Social Philosophy

2.4 Medieval Social Philosophy

2.5 Social Forces Behind the development of Sociology

2.6 Some pioneering scholars of Sociology

- 2.6.1 Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brede et de Montesquieu
- 2.6.2 Jean Jacques Rousseau
- 2.6.3 Joseph-Marie, comte de Maistre
- 2.6.4 Louis Gabriel Ambroise de Bonald
- 2.6.5 Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon
- 2.6.6 August Comte

2.7 Let Us Sum Up

2.8 Further Reading

2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.10 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand the ancient social philosophy and medieval social philosophy
- explain the social forces behind the emergence of Sociology
- discuss the theories and works of some noted sociologists.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

The development of Sociology as a discipline is a recent phenomenon, dating back to the 19th century. The historical background that predates the development of Sociology is characterized by social,

political, cultural and economic dynamics, which the unit has tried to emphasize. Sociology was born amidst and as a consequence of the changing social order of Europe, particularly France, in order to comprehend the dynamics of the emerging society, polity and economy, and their inter-relations in those times. Therefore, it was inevitable that Sociology was guided by principles of the emerging modern society like reason, logic, scientific temperament, etc. The early sociological theories, thoughts and approaches can be comprehended by understanding some significant scholars of the discipline who have contributed to the birth and growth of the discipline. However, here it must be noted that modern sociological thought was predated by the intellectual and philosophical thoughts of the ancient and the medieval periods which were different from that of the modern era. Therefore, it is important to know these philosophies before engaging in Sociology and its emergence.

In the previous unit we have discussed about the influence of enlightenment and industrial revolution in the emergence of sociology. In this unit we shall discuss the importance of social philosophy of ancient and medieval periods. We shall also discuss about some of the pioneering scholars of sociology.

2.3 ANCIENT SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Ancient social philosophy pertains to the period before the Roman empire ended. It encompasses a large array of philosophical discourses – Greek philosophy and Roman philosophy in the West; Chinese philosophy, which includes Yin-Yang philosophy, Confucianism, Taoism; Indian philosophy, which caters to the Vedas and Upanishads, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain philosophies; and Iranian philosophy, which predominantly includes Zoroastrian thought. In addition to these, ancient philosophy also includes Roman philosophy and Hellenistic philosophy.

Ancient philosophies are characterized by adherence to religious traditions, and are recognized as being of conservative in nature. The development of the western ancient philosophy is largely credited to Plato, Socrates and Aristotle.

There are some general traits which characterize the ancient philosophical thought. As mentioned above, ancient philosophy consists of a diversity of discourses which root to different intellectual traditions. It hardly needs to be mentioned that not all of those thoughts and discourses are considered to be philosophies. This is because for an intellectual line of thought to be considered as a philosophy it must be based on the tenets of rationality, logic and a systematic thought framework. On the basis of this understanding of philosophy, it can be seen that the mentioned intellectual discourses in the ancient philosophy display distinct approaches to the problems and issues and their engagement with them. The following general traits of ancient philosophy must be comprehended.

Ancient philosophy distinctly differs from modern philosophy, perhaps not so much in terms of their object of study, but a lot in their approaches and the methodologies adopted in their studies. Modern philosophy, unlike ancient philosophy, focuses on specific areas of study guided by defined methodological outlines. Consequently, the presentation of the thoughts in ancient and modern philosophies differ from each other, and hence the methods to deal with the derived understandings also vary. For example, the ancient philosophy of the Greeks was presented in the form of poetic verses, which is unlikely to be seen in the context of modern philosophical writings and presentations.

Further, as mentioned already, ancient philosophy was deeply influenced by religion. In contrast to this, the tendency of modern philosophical works is to separate religion from intellectual works. For example, ancient Indian philosophy has dealt in significant amount with religious ideologies and thoughts like that of Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.

The ancient philosophy that developed in the West was different from that of the East. For example, Indian philosophy has different roots and intellectual base. The Vedas are the basis of Indian philosophical thought which deal with questions regarding the universe, man, laws, nature, etc. The Indian philosophical questions were systematically dealt with by six schools of Philosophy. The six schools are: Nyaya, Visheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, Vedanta.

2.4 MEDIEVAL SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Medieval philosophy confines to the period after the fall of the Roman empire (5th century) upto Renaissance (16th century). Medieval philosophy began as a result of the process of revisiting the ancient Greco-Roman culture, and at the same time as an attempt to integrate that with the present day secular doctrines.

Medieval philosophy is generally classified into two periods, i.e. after the early Middle ages in the Latin West till the 12th century, and the second period is that of the 12th to 14th century.

- The medieval philosophy is characterized by certain common traits as discussed below. The medieval period and its philosophies have been perceived in two different ways. First, it was seen as a barbaric and dark period. This was the period before the Renaissance, and hence was defined by superstition, discrimination, inequality, disturbed social surroundings, etc.
- Secondly, the philosophical development of this period is seen as being influenced by Christianity. Religion was a predominant factor in the public space in this period. Hence, the church was symbolized as the epitome of law and order, conduct, morality, etc.
- Medieval philosophical thought is featured by a discourse on theology. It addressed aspects like the attribute of the divine, the evil, freedom and freewill, the soul and intellect, etc.
- It is to be noted that despite the perception of the medieval period as being barbaric and non-progressive, the philosophical works of this period were characterized by the use of reason and logic.
- Further, it can be seen that the ancient philosophical thought of Plato and Aristotle were particularly revered in the medieval period. Medieval philosophy is recognized by a systematic reference to the ancient philosophy, its analysis, and an attempt to collaborate it with the more logical and systematic thought process of the former.

2.5 SOCIAL FORCES BEHIND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology, as a discipline was developed to address the questions and the issues that the European society faced in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. It was during this time that the European society was in a transitory phase from a pre-industrialized to an industrialising society. This transition further gave rise to a variety of changes in the social, political, and economic sectors. The transitory phase in Europe was characterized by chaos, lawlessness, changing rules and regulations, amongst others. On the one hand the society was progressing towards a more rational and outward-looking way of life, on the other hand, the remnants of the recent past, traditions, culture, etc kept hovering. The Industrial Revolution and its relevance in this context have been discussed in detail in the previous unit. Another force that shaped the birth of Sociology is the French Revolution. The French Revolution portrayed the emancipating tendencies of the people of those times, whereby they attempted to liberate the society from the clutches of the so called Dark Age. Hence the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity were propagated as the ideals of the modern day. This further garnered the attention of the thinkers and analysts of the time who sought to comprehend the evolving complexities of the modern society. Thus Sociology was the result of two primary forces- the changing social circumstance, and the intellectual forces which include the enlightenment. The thinkers and scholars of this time devised ways to build a systematic thought approach to comprehend the dynamics and establish a new social order. This process led to the development of Sociology. The following account highlights the social context of the period.

The following are the significant social factors that led to the development of Sociology:

- **Socialism**: Socialism refers to Karl Marx's vision of a socio-economic system where means of production are socially owned, and not identified by individual ownership. The growth of socialism can be seen in two dimensions in the context of Europe. On the one hand

socialism gained prominence because it was seen as a way to counter the rapidly growing capitalism. On the other hand, it was opposed by many. In this context, the ideas of Karl Marx are of particular significance. Marx not only provided some important criticism against the capitalist society, but also argued and anticipated through his studies that the capitalist society can eventually be replaced by the socialist order. This, according to Marx could be reached through a revolution. Unlike Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber were of a contrasting view. While recognizing the problems associated with the capitalist order, they neither sought a revolution, nor the replacement of the capitalist society by a socialist one. Instead, they sought reforms in the prevalent social order.

- **Urbanization:** The late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries witnessed several social changes due to the emergence and growth of the industrial revolution and the consequent large scale industrialization. A significant feature of this period was the rising urban settlements in Europe. A large number of people migrated from rural to urban areas. However, it created several difficulties in terms of occupation accommodation, pollution, diseases, etc. The early sociologists, therefore, were primarily concerned about the process of urbanization, as a significant part of the discipline. It is to be noted that the American school of Sociology was primarily characterized by its emphasis on the urban studies.
- **Feminism:** Some significant social and intellectual discourses were undertaken from the feminist perspective, traceable from the 1630s. However, the rise and healthy growth of the liberal feminist outlook began around the time of the American and the French Revolution. The active form of feminist activities could be witnessed in the period of 1850s with the rise in fight for universal suffrage in America. These played a significant role in the emergence of Sociology. However, the feminist writings in the discipline of Sociology in the early times of it were only passive in nature. It was confined to some marginalized scholars, both male and female, who were not inducted in the popular

mainstream theoretical base of sociological discourses. The prominent scholars like Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, who were recognized as sociologists or as important scholars of the discipline showed a very conservative approach to the feminist works of the time. The present day form of gender discourses that Sociology emphasizes and promotes is only very recent.

- **Religion:** Religion played an important role in the socio political events of the times. Several early sociologists were associated with some religious background or the other. While for some, religion played a significant role in the social and political settings, at the same time some others viewed religion as insignificant. Emile Durkheim wrote a major work on religion called 'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life' (1912). Max Weber in his 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' (1905) discussed in length the role of religion in bringing up capitalism. Karl Marx also discussed religion, however on a different note. He was critical of the role of religion unlike Durkheim and Weber. His views on religion are well summed up by his famous statement: "Religion is the opium of the masses".
- **Science:** Sociology has always sought to establish itself as a scientific discipline. Early sociologists tried to build Sociology on the lines of natural science. The natural sciences were defined and well acknowledged subjects of study. It was in the attempt to design a scientific discipline of Sociology that the pioneering scholars of the discipline sought to define Sociology from a positivist approach. Positivism refers to the ideology that an aspect or a phenomenon could be established only when it has been verified or proved. Likewise, Emile Durkheim wrote his famous work "Suicide" (1897), based on statistical data and mathematical calculations. Similarly, Herbert Spencer argued that the method of study in Sociology is defined by organic analogy. The concept of Organic analogy means that the organization and survival of society is similar to that of a biological being. To further illustrate, just like the different parts of an organism perform different functions in order to maintain the whole of the

organism, similarly the various parts of the society perform various functions to maintain the whole society. In the nineteenth century, several attempts were made to make Sociology scientific. For example, Talcott Parsons in his study of the social structure adopted a quantitative approach. Thus Sociology, in its early days was, categorically defined by quantitative measures based on natural sciences.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Mention two social forces which contributed to the growth of Sociology

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Q.2: Who wrote the book "The Elementary forms of religious life"?

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.....

2.6 SOME PIONEERING SCHOLARS OF SOCIOLOGY

In order to attain a clearer understanding of the subject matter of Sociology and its approaches, it is essential to comprehend the theories and scholars of the discipline. The following account highlights some of the significant pioneering scholars of Sociology and their contributions to the subject.

2.6.1 Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brede et de Montesquieu (1689-1755)

Montesquieu was born on 18 January 1689 in France. He belonged to an aristocratic family. He is known to have widely traveled across Europe. He was an important person in the enlightenment, who also built a comparative perspective on the political systems of those times. Montesquieu is regarded as the founder of modern Sociology, and rightly so. He is known to have given a holistic

description of society. According to him, society is an interconnected and integrated entity. However, it must be noted that society is not merely an amalgamation of social relations and interactions, but is larger than the integrated whole. Montesquieu argued that society sometimes seems to be chaotic, but in reality society is guided by laws and institutions. He further argues that no society can be based on despotism, coercion, etc in the long run.

Montesquieu introduced Sociology of Law. He further compared and described the laws of different societies and stated that the differences between the laws of different societies exist because of the social and geographical diversities that characterize these societies. He wrote his famous work called "The Spirit of Law" (1748) which discusses law and the forms of government from a generalist perspective.

2.6.2 Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

Rousseau was born on 28 June, 1712 in Geneva. He was an important thinker of the eighteenth century who contributed significantly to the social and political thought in Europe during the time of enlightenment and the French Revolution. One of his famous works is "Social Contract" (1762). Here, Rousseau argues that an orderly and a legitimate state can be built only when its constituent members identify themselves in terms of their interests and objectives with the larger society and when they collectively devote themselves to the community and its wellbeing. Another important work by Rousseau is "Emile" (1762), which is a treatise on education. Further, Rousseau argued that not only is society based on contradictions, but also that society is corrupt by nature. According to him, the corrupt nature of society can be dealt with the help of strict laws of a particular state, which are to be followed by all. Some of his other famous works are "Discourse on the Arts and Sciences" (1750), "Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality among Men" (1754), etc.

2.6.3 Joseph-Marie, comte de Maistre (1753- 1821)

Maistre was born on 1 April, 1753 in France. He is known as an advocate of counter enlightenment. He is therefore known to have been an advocate of hierarchy and monarchy in the society. According to him, monarchy was a divine institution. He strongly opposed the rationalist ideas, and expressed that the root cause behind the social and political disturbances during and after the French Revolution was the rejection of Christianity by the rationalist thinkers. Some of his works are “Essay on the general Principle of Political Constitutions” (1847), “Letters on the Spanish Inquisition” (1838), etc.

2.6.4 Louis Gabriel Ambroise de Bonald (1754-1840)

Bonald was born on 2 October, 1754 in France. He belonged to the traditionalist or theocratic school. Therefore his works reflect his ideological tenets of conservatism, traditionalism and counter-enlightenment. His works, which largely deal with political and social philosophies, are based on the entity of language and its origins. It is from language, according to Bonald, that the existence and origin of God can be deciphered, which further gives way to the supremacy of the church. Some of his works are “Du Divorce” (1801), “Legislation Primitive” (1802), etc.

2.6.5 Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon (1760-1825)

Saint Simon was born on 17 October, 1760 in France. He is regarded as a utopian sociologist, perhaps because of his approach that perceived society as an organic whole. He is credited for influencing two distinct developments in Sociology: Marxian Socialism and Comtean Positivism. The discourse of Saint Simon is marked by some principle aspects. First, Saint Simon argued that historically human society passes through three stages which are further defined by distinct thought processes. The three stages are:

polytheism and slavery, theism and feudalism and positivism and industrialism. Further he argued that scientific positivism would enable the comprehesion the principles and laws of social dynamics and social organisation. In the context of social organization, Saint Simon viewed that the modern society should be guided and organized by industrialists and scientists, and not by clerics, lawyers and bureaucrats. This is because, according to Saint Simon, the latter are parasitic and unproductive. Emphasizing on the importance of the discipline of Sociology, he argued that the crisis that the modern society faced should be solved through the theory of positivism by the sociologists. Some of his works are “L’Industrie” (1816-1817), “Le Politique” (1819), etc.

2.6.6 August Comte (1798-1857)

August Comte was born on 19 January 1798 in France. Comte in his early days of life witnessed the historical, social and political upheavels that were undergoing in France. It was largely because of the socio-political circumstances around him perhaps, that made him ponder into the ideas of men, their relationships and therefore the society at large. In the process of comprehending the social dynamics of the time, he argued that the French society would inevitably be characterized and defined by new principles in the near future. These principles, according to Comte, shall be designed to balance and integrate the various aspects of social life of men.

The emergence of the discipline of Sociology is rooted in the fact that Europe as a society had reached a level of development which was characterized by disorganization, poverty, fear, etc. It was in his attempt to understand the upheaval in Europe, and particularly France, that led Comte to develop the idea of the discipline of Sociology. Comte coined the term Sociology and used it publicly for the first time in his “Positive Philosophy” (Volume 4) He sought to design Sociology as a science, based on the principles of natural science. Hence, Sociology for him was a discipline guided

by reason, observation, comparison, and experimentation. According to Comte, such a disciplinary approach would enable us to understand the social dynamics, and most importantly, to comprehend the evolution of the society from one stage to another. Comte, in order to systematize the scope and subject matter of the discipline, distinguished social life into the following:

- ***Static:*** It focuses on the conditions of social existence, which are relatively permanent in nature. In other words, static studies the social order.
- ***Dynamic:*** It studies the dynamic aspects of society, like the ever changing stages of the society. In other words, it studies social change or progress.

  Further, Comte argued that the human mind develops and passes through three stages across all societies. These three stages are referred to as the Law of the three stages. The three stages are the following:
- ***Theological Stage:*** According to Comte, in this stage the human mind perceives that all phenomena are guided by supernatural beings.
- ***Metaphysical stage:*** In this stage, according to Comte, men tend to comprehend the world in terms of an essence of God.
- ***Positive stage:*** In this stage, as Comte perceives, men are guided by logic, reason and laws.

Comte, in addition to the evolution of society from one stage to another, also viewed that all the sciences that have been established have also evolved from a simple to a complex stage. According to Comte, the emergence and the level of complexity of the different sciences can be seen in the following order: Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. Sociology developed very late as compared to the other sciences. The reason behind the late emergence of Sociology as a discipline is that Sociology is the most complex of all sciences, as it's subject matter i.e. the society is the most complex to study. Thus, Comte states that Sociology is the

queen of sciences. Some of his works are "A General View of Positivism" (1856), "System of Positive Polity", etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Mention the stages entailed in August Comte's idea of the Law of three stages.

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Q 4: Mention some pioneering scholars of the discipline of Sociology.

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Several scholars attempted to build and design Sociology as a discipline in their attempt to understand the transforming social order in Europe in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Their contribution to the subject have been significant in terms of their approach, engagement of issues, and the resultant insights into the problems and questions of the time. However, it must be noted that it was only August Comte who not only systematically and formally established Sociology as a discipline of study, but also built its nomenclature. It was since then that Sociology began to be identified as a disciplinary matter which is characterized by a set of defined subject matter, approach, theoretical framework, and methodology.



2.7 LET US SUM UP

- Ancient social philosophy belongs to the period before the end of the Roman empire. It is characterized by the dominance of religious ideals, and is conservative by nature. Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle were the main scholars of this period.
- Medieval Social philosophy belongs to the period after the fall of the Roman empire upto the period of the Rennaisance. The works of this time attempted to integrate the secular ideals of this period with the ancient philosophy.

- Sociology emerged in the eighteenth century in Europe. It was a result of the social, political and economic dynamics of the period.
- Some significant social factors which gave rise to Sociology are: Socialism, Urbanisation, Feminism, Religion and Science.



2.8 FURTHER READING

1) Abercrombie, Nicholas and Stephen Hill & Bryan S. Turner. (2000). *The penguin Dictionary of Sociology*; England.
2) Borgotta, Edgar F. and Rhonda J. V. Montgomery. (2000). *Encyclopedia of Sociology*; Cengage Learning Publisher.
3) Giddens, Anthony. (1997). *Sociology*; Polity Press.
4) Haralambos, H and R M Heald. (1997). *Sociology : Themes and Perspectives*. Oxford Publication.
5) Ritzer, George. (2010). *Sociological Theory*. McGraw Hill Education.
6) Turner, Jonathan H.(2002). *The Structure of Sociological Theory*. Wardsworth Publishing Co Inc.



2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Urbanisation, Socialism, Feminism.

Ans to Q No 2: Emile Durkheim.

Ans to Q No 3: Theological, Metaphysical, Positive

Ans to Q No 4: August Comte, Saint Simon.



2.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: List the general characteristics of Ancient social philosophy.

Q 2: List the general characteristics of medieval social philosophy.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Discuss and differentiate between the ancient-medieval philosophical thought and the modern philosophical thought after the emergence of Sociology.

Q 2: How did Sociology emerge as a discipline? Highlight the social factors which gave rise to the discipline of Sociology.

Q 3: Discuss the contribution of some noted early scholars of Sociology to the discipline.

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UNIT 3: FUNCTIONALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Structural Functionalism

- 3.3.1 Talcott Parson's Systematic View of Society
- 3.3.2 R.K.Merton's Systematic View of Society
- 3.3.3 Major Criticism of Structural Functionalism
- 3.3.4 Neo-functionalism

3.4 Let Us Sum Up

3.5 Further Reading

3.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.7 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- know about structural functionalism
- understand the systematic view of society in the words of Talcott Parsons and R.K.Merton
- discuss the criticisms against Structural Functionalism
- explain the concept of Neo-Functionalism.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

We are aware of the fact that because we live in a society, we share relations with the ones we come across. Be it institutions like family, religion, kinship or caste group, we tend to develop relations with one another and these institutions keep continuing as we work or interact as various parts of the systems or institutions. In order to maintain coherence and solidarity in the society, functioning of the different or inter-related parts in association with the whole system is essential for the sustenance of the systems. Every individual has variety of functions to perform and this in turn makes the

functioning of the society. In the previous unit we have discussed about the social forces and also about the contribution of different thinkers to the growth of Sociology as a discipline. In this unit, we shall try to understand the theories of functionalism, perspective on the systematic view of society by Talcott Parsons and R.K. Merton, criticisms against structural functionalism and theory of neo-functionalism.

3.3 STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

Structural functionalism is a sociological theory that sees society as a structure of inter-related parts that form a whole system. It addresses the elements like norms, customs, folkways, mores, traditions and institutions as the parts in relation to the whole system of societal functioning. This theory believes that society has evolved like an organism. Herbert Spencer refers to the various parts of the society as 'organs' which work in coordination for the maintenance of the 'body' i.e. the cohesive system or society. For example, If we take family as a system, then the members are the parts with individual elements of working, helping and sharing which would help the functioning of the whole system of family.

In structural functionalism, the terms structural and functional may be used separately. We can study a social structure without its functions. Similarly we could also examine the various functions of society without its structural forms. Structural functionalism may assume various forms but the most dominant form is attributed to Societal Functionalism that aims to explain the role of large-scale social structures, the institutions of society, the inter-relations between these structures and the ways in which individual actions are constrained.

The Functional Theory of Stratification, forwarded by Kinsley Davis and Wilbert Moore, is best regarded as the most significant work in structural-functional theory. According to Davis and Moore, social stratification is both universal as well as a necessity. Stratification, in their view, is a functional necessity and a structure where the system of positions is referred in the stratification system and not the individuals. It is not the individuals who are ranked but the positions that are ranked according to the degree to which

they contribute for the survival of the society. In their view, to be sure that people occupy high-ranking positions, the society should also provide sufficient rewards to the positions so that people will seek to occupy them and work with care. The functional theory of stratification was criticized on grounds that there should be other means of motivating people to work rather than attaching rewards only.

Structural functionalism as a theory has declined over time and it can be reflected in Colomy's (1990s) description of structural functionalism as a theoretical 'tradition'. However, some sociologist appreciated the theory of structural functionalism immensely which is reflected in the words of Robert Nisbet that structural functionalism was ''without doubt, the single most significant body of theory in the social sciences in the present century''.

3.3.1 Talcott Parson's Systematic View of Society

Talcott Parsons was an American Sociologist. His structural functionalism comprises of four functional imperatives or functions which is called the AGIL system. Using Rocher's definition on function i.e. a function is a complex of activities directed towards meeting a need or needs of the system, Talcott Parsons believes that a system is required to perform the four functions in order to survive. The AGIL system stands for - adaptation (A), goal attainment (G), integration (I) and latency (L).

- **Adaptation:** a system must adapt to the environment and also adapt the environment to its need. It must deal with external situational need or urgency, if any.
- **Goal attainment:** a system must establish or define the goals and also achieve them.
- **Integration:** a system must coordinate and maintain interrelations with the component parts and also administer the relationship among the other functional imperatives (A, G and I).
- **Latency:** it is also called pattern maintenance. A system must ensure that motivations of both the actors or individuals and

cultural patterns are managed and renewed.

Now we shall discuss Talcott Parson's **Action System** in terms of the AGIL model. Action is the process which enables individuals to get motivated in pursuing their goals. There are four action systems namely Behavioral Organism, Personality System, Social System and Cultural System.

- The behavioral organism is the action system which handles the function of adaptation thereby adjusting to and changing the external world.

  This system is based on the hereditary aspect which stands as the source of energy for the other systems to function and operate. The human body adopts itself to the conditions and learning taking place in the individual's life.

- The personality system is associated with the goal-attainment function which helps individuals to mobilize resources and set goals to achieve them.

  This system involves orientation and motivation to actors for action. Need disposition, defined as drives acquired through the process of action and shaped by the social setting is regarded as the most significant unit of the personality system. Actors are impelled to accept or reject objects in the environment or to seek out new objects if the objects present do not suffice or satisfy them.

- The social system performs the integration function by controlling the component parts of the system.

  In order to maintain the balance of the social system, socialization and social control are the main mechanisms according to Talcott Parsons. He viewed the social system as a system of interaction but he considered the status-role as the structural component of the social system. An actor or individual is seen in terms of his multiple statuses and roles. Status refers to a structural position within the social system and role is the part or function played by the individual in that

position. He was also interested in the other components of the social system like norms, values and collectivities which helps the social system in operating with other systems and can have a control over disruptive behavior.

- The cultural system performs the latency function where it provides the actors with norms and values thereby inspiring them to act.

  This system has the stock of knowledge, ideas and symbols which mediates interaction among the actors and helps them in integrating the values in the personality system and social systems as well. Culture is seen as a patterned and ordered system of symbols which moves from one system to another thereby enhancing the function of socialization and learning among the actors.

Figure 2.3.1.1

Structure of the General Action System

L **I**

Cultural System	**Social System**
Behavioral System	**Personality System**

A **G**

According to Talcott Parsons, the action system works in a hierarchy and the levels of social analysis are integrated in two ways. First, the conditions and energy needed for the higher levels, is provided by the lower levels. Second, the higher levels tend to control those below it in the hierarchy. It is said that the four action systems do not exist in the real world but they are to be regarded as the analytical tools in examining the real world.

Society is considered as a relatively self-sufficient collectivity of the social system where the individuals are able to satisfy their individual and collective needs. There are four types of sub-systems or structures in society which performs various functions in terms of

the AGIL schema. The economy as the subsystem with features of labor, production and allocation, adapts to the needs of the environment. The polity or political system performs the function of goal attainment by organizing actors to use the societal purposes. The fiduciary system (example- norms in school and family) performs the latency function by imparting norms, values to individuals helping them to inculcate it. The societal community (example- the law) performs the integration function by coordinating and collaborating with various parts of the society.

Figure 2.3.1.2

Society, Its Sub-systems and the Functional Imperatives

L **I**

Fiduciary System	**Societal System**
Economy	**Polity**

A **G**

3.3.2 Robert K. Merton's Systematic View of Society

Robert K. Merton was a student of Talcott Parsons. Unlike Parsons, Merton was inclined towards Marxian theories. Merton found three problematic functional postulates or assumptions of functional analysis of anthropological features put forward by Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown stating that the postulates rely on non-empirical assertions based on abstracts and theoretical systems.

- Functional unity of the society is the first postulate which states that individuals and the whole society must show a high level of integration in the social and cultural beliefs and practices. Merton opposed this view stating that the functionality of beliefs and practices might hold true in a small and primitive society but not in complex societies. For example- Diversity of religious beliefs may not bind all people together and there are bound to be differences.

- The second postulate is universal functionalism which states that 'all standardized social and cultural norms and structures have positive functions'. Merton criticized it saying that in the real world not all structures, belief, custom, idea etc will have positive functions. For example- Loyalism may be highly dysfunctional in a world of corruption.
- Indispensability is the third postulate which argues that all structures and functions are indispensable or essential parts which are functionally necessary for all. Merton is of the view that there will be structures and functions which will play the alternative part in the society. For example- Most people are followers of a religion but some may be followers of some ideologies.

Merton was of the opinion that focal point of the structural functionalist should be on social functions than on the individual motives. Functions, according to Merton, are ''those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system". It is to be noted that there will be both positive and negative consequences for social facts or in the process of adjustment. To cope with this, Merton developed an idea of dysfunction which means in addition to a structure and its maintenance, there will also be negative results. For example- The capitalist class or entrepreneurs has the positive result of having employees working according to the wishes of their employers but at the same time there will be negative consequence when the employees will walk out of their position due to job dissatisfaction.

Merton developed the idea of levels of functional analysis which can serve as guide to theory and research and help in analyzing institutions, groups and organizations. He introduced two concepts namely manifest functions and latent functions. Manifest functions are those which are intended. For example- We earn income because we intend to live a life of our wishes. Latent functions are those which are unintended. For example- Some people draw

because they love to which serves as a delight to the eye for the onlookers. Merton was of the opinion that in the functional theory, a structure may be dysfunctional but yet it may continue to exist. For example- atrocities and violence against women is dysfunctional for a society but it functions for the perpetrators of violence on women.

Merton also analyzed the relationship between culture, structure and anomie. Culture is defined by Merton as ''that organized set of normative values governing behavior which is common to members of a designated society or a group''. He defined social structure as '' that organized set of social relationships in which members of the society or group are variously implicated" and anomie is said to occur ''when there is an acute disjunction between cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of the members of the group to act in accord with them''. It is to be noted that people occupy different positions in the social structure of a society; therefore some people may not be able to act corresponding to normative values. Culture brings in values and behavior in society that which is prevented by the society. Merton is of the view that the lack of correspondence between culture and structure leads to a situation of anomie or no presence of norms which ultimately results in deviant behavior. For example- People usually have a penchant for material culture or success but it is not always achievable for all because one's position in the social structure will be different and so will be the income level. This might instigate some people to pursue unfair means to get hold of material success thus resulting in deviance from norms and values that a culture provides.

3.3.3 Major Criticism of Structural Functionalism

Like all other theories, structural functionalism is also not free from criticisms. The criticisms can be divided into two parts: (a) Substantive Criticisms and (b) Methodological and Logical Criticisms.

Under 'substantive criticisms', it has been argued that

structural functionalism is ahistoriacal i.e. it does not deal with history. Secondly, it was criticized as structural functionalism was unable to deal with the contemporary process of social change. Lastly, structural functionalism has been attacked for its inability to deal with conflict occurring inside the society. Structural functionalism tends to focus on culture, norms and values and ignores history, change and conflict; therefore it is argued that structural functionalism has a conservative bias. It is also criticized because structural functionalism fails to address a number of important aspects of the society therefore confining itself to a narrow domain.

Under 'methodological and logical criticisms', structural functionalism is said to be vague and an ambiguous theory which deals with more abstract concepts of the social systems rather than its focus on the aspects of the real societies. A second criticism labeled against structural functionalism is on its belief that a single theory or a set of theories could help to make an analysis of the society. But in reality it is difficult to ascertain the aspects of a society with the help of a single theory. Another criticism is whether there is availability of adequate methods to study questions of concern to study a part of the society in relation to other parts or the whole. The last methodological criticism is that a comparative analysis between parts of the social system is difficult in structural functionalism.

3.3.4 Neo-functionalism

As by the mid 1960s the importance of structural functionalism declined, a new theory namely Neofunctionalism was undertaken to continue and extend structural functionalism thereby overpowering the difficulties of structural functionalism. Neofunctionalism has been defined by Jeffrey Alexander and Paul Colomy as a ''self-critical strand of functional theory that seeks to broaden functionalism's intellectual scope while retaining its theoretical core''. Thus structural functionalism has been seen as a

narrow theory by Alexander and Colomy and they aim to make it into a more synthetic theory.

Talcott Parsons was interested in the inter-relationships in spheres of cultural, social and personality system of the social world. But by emphasizing more on the cultural system as the determining domain of the other systems, Parsons has narrowed down his approach thereby giving the chance to neofunctionalism to step up. Alexander argued that structural functionalism had problems like 'anti-individualism', 'antagonism to change', 'idealism' and an 'antiempirical bias', which neofunctionalism needs to overcome. Some basic aspects or orientations of neofucntionalism as pointed out by Alexander are the following:

- Neofunctionalism is an open-ended and pluralistic theory which functions with a descriptive model of society that looks into society as composed of elements, which when interacts with other elements of the society forms a pattern.
- Neofunctionalism, as argued by Alexander, gives a broad sense of attention to action and order, to both rational and expressive action. Unlike structural functionalism which gives attention to macro-level sources of order in society, neofunctionalism devotes attention to both macro and micro order in society.
- Deviance and social control has been recognized as realities within the social system by neofucntionalism. Both the concept of partial and moving equilibrium in the society has been put into focus of neofunctionalism and they see equilibrium as a reference point for functional analysis, not as a descriptive pattern related to the lives of the people.
- The Parsonian concept of personality, culture and social system has been taken into account by neofunctionalism. The insertion of these systems into the society is also to account for tensions which shall call for both change and order.
- The social change which undergoes in the process of differentiation within the system of social, culture and

personality is concentrated by neofunctionalism.

- Lastly it has been argued by Alexander that neofunctionalism is committed to the independence of conceptualization and theorizing from other levels of sociological analysis.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Define structural functionalism.

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Q 2: What does AGIL stand for?

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Q 3: Write the four action systems.

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Q 4: State the two divisions of criticism of structural functionalism.

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3.4 LET US SUM UP

- Structural functionalism as a theory that studies the various inter-related elements of the society forming the whole system.
- According to Talcott Parsons, for a society to survive, four main functions are to be performed. They are Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration and Latency.
- The action system in terms with the AGIL model is necessary to motivate individuals to pursue the goals. The four action systems are behavioral organism, personality system, social system and cultural system.

- There are the sub-systems in term with the AGIL system which helps in individual needs. They are Economy, Polity, Societal system and Fiduciary System.
- Robert k. Merton in this study of society rejected the functional postulates namely functional unity of the society, universal functionalism and indispensability put forwarded by the anthropologist.
- The relationship between culture, structure and anomie and the changes being brought by these domains has been emphasized by Merton.
- Structural functionalism has been said to be biased which focuses on culture, norms and values but ignores history, change and conflict.
- Neofunctionalism as a theory attempts to make functionalism a broader concept by retaining its theoretical value.



3.5 FURTHER READING

1) Ritzer, George, and Goodman, Douglas J. (2003). *Sociological Theory*. Mc Graw-Hill.



3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Structural functionalism is a sociological theory that sees society as a structure of inter-related parts that form a whole system.

Ans to Q No 2: AGIL stands for Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration and Latency.

Ans to Q No 3: The four action systems are Behavioral system, Personality system, Social system and Cultural system.

Ans to Q No 4: Substantive criticism, Methodological and Logical criticism.



3.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: Write about functional theory of stratification.

Q2: Write Rocher's definition on function and explain the AGIL system.

B. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Explain Robert K. Merton's systematic view of Society.

Q2: Which two persons are associated with neofunctionalism. Explain the basic points argued by Jeffrey Alexander.

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UNIT 4: STRUCTURALSIM

UNIT STRUCTURE:

4.1 Learning Ojectives
4.2 Introduction
4.3 Structuralism as metaphysical assumption
4.4 Structuralism as a method
4.5 A. R Radcliffe Brown's Approach to Structuralism
4.6 Levi Strauss's Approach to Structuralism
4.7 Critique of Structuralism
4.8 Post-structuralism
4.9 Structuration
4.10 Let Us Sum Up
4.11 Further Reading
4.12 Answer to Check Your Progress
4.13 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand Structuralism as metaphysical assumption and as a method of analysis
- explain contributions of Levi Strauss towards the development of structuralist approach
- discuss the contributions of Radcliff Brown to Structuralism
- explain the drawbacks of structuralism; emergence of Post-structuralism and Gidden's structuration theory.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

Structuralism as one popular intellectual discourse emerged in France during the period 1960s super-ceding the contemporary dominant theories like Marxism, Phenomenology, and Existentialism. We must mention here about Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist of early twentieth

century was the founding father of the method. His work stands out in the development of structural linguistics and ultimately structuralism in various other fields. Structuralists applied structural linguistic concepts to the human sciences. French anthropologist Levi-Strauss has extended Saussaure's work on language to anthropological issues like myth in the primitive societies. He has also applied structuralism to all forms of communication. Another variant of structuralism that enjoyed considerable success in France was structuralist Marxism especially the work of Louis Althusser and Nicos Poullantaz, and Maurice Godelier. In the previous unit we have discussed about the structural functionalist perspective in sociology, its limitations and also the emergence of neo functionalism. In this unit we will discuss in detailed about the nature of structuralism, another important sociological perspective and contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure. In addition to that a detailed discussion will be made on Radcliffe Browns and Levi Strauss's approach to structuralism.

4.3 STRUCTURALISM AS METAPHYSICAL ASSUMPTION

We know that the word metaphysics refers to an entity which is beyond physics or physical existence. In other words it refers to something which is abstract. And if we look into structuralism it also talks about an underlying structure which we cannot see but which produces a phenomenon and also tries to find out logic. Therefore structuralism is a metaphysical assumption which will become apparent after going through the subsequent discussion on structuralism.

In common parlance the term structuralism is used loosely in sociology to refer to any approach which considers social structure as having priority over social action or society as being prior to individuals. More specifically it refers to a theoretical perspective which became fashionable during the 1960s and the 1970s. It is a method of enquiry or in some formulations a more general philosophy of science which has affinities with realism and which contested the position of positivism and empiricism. It has made its way from linguistic to literary criticism, sociology of literature,

anthropology, social sciences etc. The basic structuralist strategy is to regard language as the model for all reality. Collins maintained that it is not just reality that we see through the lens provided by our words. This would be a subjective kind of realism. Instead the structuralists propose that reality is itself a language, whose underlying structure is our duty to decode. Reality is objective not subjective and some structuralists go so far as to declare they are “anti-humanists” and practitioners of a “ philosophy without a subject”. That is to say reality is text which we may read. Structuralists point out that the underlying structures are beyond the level of the individual, that our individual human consciousness is not the ultimate level of analysis, but is on the level of the empirical “parole” that is a product of deeper structures. Our individual minds are the surface, not the depth. Structuralism warns us against stopping on this superficial level and advocates push to a more fundamental level of structures from which it derives.

The basic idea of this approach is that we can differentiate underlying structures from the often fluctuating and changing appearance of reality. Again for Levi Strauss and semiotics generally these underlying structures are categories of mind, in terms of which we organize the world around us. We have already mentioned that the structuralists applied structural linguistic to human science. To have a clear understanding it is necessary to discuss about structural linguistics. All modern proponents of structuralism owe allegiance to Ferdinand de Saussure. His distinction between *langue* and *parole* is very important. Langue is the formal, grammatical system of language. Parole is actual speech, the way speakers use language. Saussure viewed *Langue (language)* as system of signs , which has structure and the meaning of each sign is produced by the relationship with others. Here the relationships of difference, especially of binary oppositions are important. The meaning of the word black does not come from the intrinsic properties of the word but from the word’s relationship with the binary opposite white. The language or the system of sign could be described synchronically. The synchronic approach involves the study of a linguistic system in a particular state without reference to time (a static set of relationships independent of any change that take place over time).

According to Saussure the basic unit of language is a sign which consists of a signifier (a sound image or its graphic equivalent) and a signified (the concept). For example a word consists of the letter G-R-A-P-E functions as a signifier by producing in the mind of the speaker the concept (signified) of a kind of fruit that grows on vine, viz., a grape. According to Saussure the relation betweeen a signifier and a siginfied is arbitrary, because there is no absolute reason why this particular graphic mark (G-R-A-P-E) should signify the concept grape. There is no natural connection or resemblance between the signifier and the signified. Meanings, the mind and the social world are shaped by the structure of language. Thus, instead of an existential world of people shaping their surroundings, we have a world in which people, as well as other aspects of the social world, are shaped by the structure of language.

Noam Chomsky makes another contribution to structural theory which is of importance in linguistics. He pointed towards the distinction between surface structure and deep structure. A surface structure consists of the collection of words and sounds that we articulate and hear in a sentence. Two sentences may have the same structure at the surface level, yet they have different meanings because their deep structures are different.

From the above discussion we can conclude that structuralism always starts with certain assumptions. It considers the world firstly as a product of ideas, secondly the world as a logical pattern. The structuralists explain structuralism with reference to logic. Lastly it talks about the “the death of a subject”. Subject means an agency, action and person.

4.4 STRUCTURALISM AS A METHOD

The principal feature of the structuralist method is that it takes as its object of investigation a ‘system’, that is, the reciprocal relations among a set of facts, rather than particular facts considered in isolation. Its basic concepts according to Piaget are those of totality, self-regulation and transformation. In most general sense, the concept of structure involves three key ideas:

- A structure is always a system, composed of elements, with the focus not on the elements themselves, but on the rules that govern their composition.
- The properties of the whole are distinct and not reducible to the properties of the parts.
- The system is self regulating, in that it operates to return to a stable state if its equilibrium is disturbed. Structures are also seen as epigenetic, i.e., their genesis, or origin, is already present in the same manner as the nature of the frog is present in nascent form in the tadpole.

The structuralist revolution deployed holistic analysis that analyzed phenomena in terms of parts and wholes, defining a structure as the interrelation of parts within a common system. Structures are governed by unconscious codes of rules, as when language constituted meaning through a differential set of binary opposites, or when mythologies codified eating and sexual behaviour according to systems of rules and codes. Structural analysis focuses on the underlying rules which organized phenomena into a social system.

Practitioners of structuralism apply the method to different areas. Levi Strauss to myth and kinship, Barthes to literature, advertisements, automobiles, Foucault to history and Althuser to capitalism.

4.5 A. R RADCLIFFE BROWN'S APPROACH TO STRUCTURALISM

Radcliffe-Brown has often been associated with functionalism, and is considered by some to be the founder of structural functionalism. Nonetheless, Radcliffe-Brown vehemently denied being a functionalist. Radcliffe Brown states that in the study of social structure, the concrete reality with which we are concerned is the set of actually existing relations at a given moment of time. These link together certain human beings. Social structure therefore, is to be defined as a continuing arrangement of reasons in relationships defined or controlled by institutions i.e. socially established norms and patterns of behavior.

He regards the study of social structure as the most fundamental part of social anthropology. According to him natural science is the systematic investigation of the structure of the universe which is revealed through our senses. There are certain important separate branches of science, each of which deals with a certain class or kind of structure, the aim being to discover the characteristics of all structures of that kind. For example atomic physics deals with the structure of atoms, chemistry with the structure of molecules, crystallography and colloidal chemistry with the structure of crystals and colloids, and anatomy and physiology with the structures of organisms. He viewed that there is place for a branch of natural science the task of which will be the discovery of the general characteristics of those social structures of which the component units are human beings. For Brown, social anthropology is the 'theoretical natural science of human society'. That means social phenomenon is to be investigated by methods similar to those used in natural and biological sciences.

Social phenomena constitute a distinct class of natural phenomena. They are somehow connected with the existence of social structures, either being implied in or resulting from them. Social structures are just as real as are individual organisms. A complex organism is a collection of living cells and interstitial fluids arranged in a certain structure; and a living cell is similarly a structural arrangement of complex molecules. The physiological and psychological phenomena that we observe in the lives of organisms are not simply the result of the nature of the constituent molecules or atoms of which the organism is built up, but are the result of the structure in which they are united. So also the social phenomena which we observe in any human society are not the immediate result of the nature of individual human beings, but are the result of the social structure by which they are united.

A particular social relation between two persons exists only as part of a wide network of social relations, involving many other persons or in other words we can say that as a person the human being is a complex of social relationships which is the object of investigations or unit of study for sociologist or social anthropologists.

Again it is important to mention here that the word social structure is

used in a number of different ways. There are some anthropologists who use the term social structure to refer only to persistent social groups, such as nations, tribes and clans, which retain their continuity, their identity as individual groups, in spite of changes in their membership. Dr. Evans-Pritchard, in his recent admirable book on the Nuer, prefers to use the term social structure in this sense. Certainly the existence of such persistent social groups is an exceedingly important aspect of structure. But Brown finds it more useful to include under the term social structure the following two aspects:

- All social relations of person to person as a part of the social structure. For example, the kinship structure of any society consists of a number of such dyadic relations, as between a father and son, or a mother's brother and his sister's son. In an Australian tribe the whole social structure is based on a network of such relations of person to person, established through genealogical connections.
- The differentiation of individuals and of classes by their social role. The differential social positions of men and women, of chiefs and commoners, of employers and employees, are just as much determinants of social relations as belonging to different clans or different nations.

Brown viewed that social structure is the concrete reality which comprised a set of actually existing relations at a given moment of time, which link together certain human beings. Throughout the life of an organism its structure is being constantly renewed; and similarly the social life constantly renews the social structure. Thus the actual relations of persons and groups of persons change from year to year, or even from day to day. New members come into a community.

Social relations are only observed, and can only be described, by reference to the reciprocal behaviour of the persons related. The form of a social structure has therefore to be described by the patterns of behaviour to which individuals and groups conform in their dealings with one another. These patterns are partially formulated in rules which, in our own society,

we distinguish as rules of etiquette, of morals and of law. Brown has made an attempt to define the concept of social structure, rather than taking it for granted.

4.6 LEVI STRAUSS'S APPROACH TO STRUCTURALISM

The origin of the Levi-Strauss' approach is very much linked with Saussre's structural linguistics. He has extended Saussure's work on language to anthropological issues like kinship system and myth in primitive societies. His article *'Social Structure'* is an abstract statement of his theoretical approach. He starts by distinguishing between the level of social relations, the raw material for the model, the social structure which is built up after reality and serves to explain it. He viewed that social structure has nothing to do with reality, but with the models built after it. Levi Strauss' concept of model formation is influenced by structural linguistics. By using Saussurean concepts like langue and parole, paradigmatic and syntagmatic, code and message etc. he has formulated the concept of model. According to him a model must have the following characteristics:

- It is made up of several elements and a change in one leads to change in all.
- Therefore it is possible for one to predict the reaction of a given model after certain modifications to one or more of its elements.
- Subsidiary models could be possibly derived out of a given model, that is, the same structure occurs in different forms and in different cultures.

Again a social structure is a model because:

- if one part of the social structure is affected, it in turn affects the other parts
- parts of social structure undergo transformation
- social structure makes prediction possible.

We can illustrate Levi-Strauss' concept of 'social structure as a model' by drawing examples from his study of Kinship where he has focused on the similarities between linguistic system and kinship system. The terms

used to describe kinship are like phonemes in language and kinship system, like phonemes, are built by the mind at the level of unconscious thought. In kinship system focus is not on the terms as entities but on their relationship within a system, which is structured. Neither the kinship terms nor the phonemes have meaning in themselves. Both acquire meaning only when they are integral part of a system. Levi –Strauss also used the system of binary opposites in kinship like those applied by Saussure in language. He used the atom of kinship to analyze kinship structure in a society. Atom of kinship always consists of four types of relationships a) conjugal b) sibling c) filial d) avuncular. Levi-Strauss viewed that in every society these four types of relationships are either of restraint or of indulgence.

After applying Saussure's Linguistic Structuralism to kinship system, Levi- Strauss made the argument that both phonemic system and kinship system are the product of structure of mind. They are not the product of conscious process. They are the product of the unconscious, logical structure of mind.

4.7 CRITIQUE OF STRUCTURALISM

According to Collins the biggest weakness of structuralism is that it promised more than it could deliver. Levi- Strauss claimed that he would produce a science and would crack the genetic code that underlines human societies but did not succeed. The Structuralist thinkers have borrowed linguistic theory as an analogy, but they have neither kept up with the technical advances in linguistics itself, nor have they contributed toward unifying sociological principles with those of linguistics. Thirdly Levi-Strauss was proposing that each society had its own particular code, underlying all items of its structure. This seems to be an extension of his theory of kinship, which was based on separating out different forms of kinship systems. But Levi-Strauss was never able to show that such a code existed for each society. Levi-Strauss and other structuralists, although drawing upon Saussure for a general model, never tried to incorporate language itself to their analysis. They analyzed myth, kinship system etc. but did not look directly at the structure of the langauges. Giddens also criticized Levi-Strauss

for ignoring human agency or the capacity of people to reflect, monitor, define and decide.

4.8 POST-STRUCTURALISM

As structuralism grew within sociology, a movement was developing in France during the 1960s critiquing structuralism, which is known as post structuralism. Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes were the major proponents of post-structuralism. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* :

> post-structuralism's prime achievement has been to rediscover and extend the radical analytical possibilities inherent in Saussure's theory of language as a significatory rather than representational phenomenon.

Post-structuralism accepts the importance of structure but it goes beyond the structure to cover a wide range of concerns. It is often seen as forerunner of postmodern theory and even it is difficult to draw the clear line between these two thoughts. Because of this reason post-structuralists are often seen as postmodernists. But the major difference between post-structuralism and postmodernism is that post-structuralism is more abstract and philosophical than postmodernism. Post-strcturalists firmly reject the notion that there is a steady structure to texts, particularly the theory of binary opposition and it has put forwarded the concept of deconstruction.

According to Derrida the meaning of a text can be plural and unstable rather than fixed and a rigid structure. All texts actually exhibit difference thereby allowing multiple interpretations. The meaning or truth is determined by the limitations of the discipline, which supposedly discovers and describe them. He further argued that meanings are never absolute and settled. It is actually conditioned by specific historical and social knowledge.

Foucault also came to be seen as one important representative of the post-structuralist movement. He agreed that language and society were shaped by the rule governed systems, but he disagreed with the structuralists on two points. Because he did not think that there were definite underlying structures that could explain the human condition and secondly he thought

it was impossible to step outside of discourse and survey the situation objectively. Foucault's work illustrates another difference between post-structuralism and structuralism. Structuralism is mostly influenced by linguistics. But Foucault has put in a variety of theoretical inputs. Even though he gives importance to many social institutions, for him micro-politics of power is the most important aspect of social structure. Foucault examines social institutions and their associated discourses by taking power relations as the major perspective.

4.9 STRUCTURATION

The theory of structuration was proposed by Anthony Giddens in his work *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. This theory is actually an attempt to resolve the theoretical dichotomies of social structures like agent/structure, mico/macro perspective etc. Rather than focussing on individual actors or societal totality, it focuses on social practices, order across space and time.

This theory intends to communicate the duality of structure i.e it avoids extremes of structural or agent determinism. It is social structure which makes social action possible and simultaneously social action creates social structure i.e social structure is used by active agents and using the properties of social structure they reproduce this structure. According to Giddens structures are rules and resources that actors use in interaction contexts. Rules are generalized procedures that actors understand and use in various circumstances. These rules are frequently used in conversations, interaction rituals, and daily routines of individuals. They are informal and are weakly sanctioned through inter personal technique. Resources are facilities that actors use to get things done. Rules and resources can be transformed into many different patterns and profiles. Resources can be mobilized in different ways to perform activities and achieve ends.

Further Giddens viewed that social system could be understood by its structure, modality and interaction. We have already discussed about the structure. Modality of a structural system is the means through which

structures are translated into actions and interaction is the activity instantiated by the agent acting within the social system. He also identifies three type of structures in a social system. These are accordingly: signification, legitimation and domination. Signification produces meaning through organized weds of language, legitimation produces moral order and domination produces power, originating from control of resources.

The synthesis of diverse theoretical traditions is the most important element of Gidden's theoretical effort. His theory is essentially concerned with the way in which interaction becomes "deeply sedimented in time and space. However, the theory of structuration is not free from criticism. Turner viewed that while Giddens' writing is crisp, and eloquent, it is also vague. There is a great deal of jargon, metaphor, and just plain impression that are difficult to understand.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What do you understand by structure?

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Q 2: Distinguish between langue and parole.

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Q 3: What is the basic unit of language?

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Q 4: Define rules and resources.

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Q 5: What are the three different types of structure in a social system according to Giddens?

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4.10 LET US SUM UP

- Structuralism as one popular intellectual discourse emerged in Frace during the 1960s. The term structuralism is used loosely in sociology to refer to any approach which considers social structure as having priority over social action or society as prior to individuals.
- Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist of early twentieth century was the founding father of the method.
- Structuralists point out that the underlying structures are beyond the level of the individual, that our individual human consciousness is not the ultimate level of analysis, but is on the level of the empirical “parole” that is a product of deeper structures. Our individual minds are on the surface, not the depth.
- Structuralism warns us against stopping on this superficial and advocaties a push to a more fundamental level of structures from which it derives.
- The principal feature of the structuralist method is that it takes as its object of investigation a ‘system’, that is, the reciprocal relations among a set of facts, rather than particular facts considered in isolation.
- Radcliffe Brown viewed that social structure is the concrete reality which comprised of a set of actually existing relations at a given moment of time, which link together certain human beings. Throughout the life of an organism its structure is being constantly renewed; and similarly the social life constantly renews the social structure.
- Levi- Strauss applied Saussure’s Linguistic structuralism to kinship system and argued that both phonemic system and kinship system are the product of structure of mind. They are not the product of conscious process. They are the product of the unconscious, logical structure of mind.
- According to Collins the biggest weakness of structuralism is that it promised more than it could deliver.

- Post-structuralism accepts the importance of structure but it goes beyond the structure to cover a wide range of concerns. Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes were the major proponents of post-structuralism.
- The major difference between post-structuralism and postmodernism is that post-structuralism is more abstract and philosophical than mosmodernism. Post-strcturalists firmly reject the notion that there is a steady structure to texts, particularly the theory of binary opposition and it has put forward the concept of deconstruction.
- The theory of structuration was proposed by Anthony Giddens with the help of which he made an attempt to resolve the theoretical dichotomies of social structure like agent/structure, mico/macro perspective etc.
- It avoid extremes of structural or agent determinism. It is social structure which makes social action possible and simultaneously social action creates social structure.



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4. 12 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: A structure is always a system, composed of elements, with the focus not on the elements themselves but on the rules that govern their composition.The properties of the whole are distinct and not reducible to the properties of the parts.

Ans to Q No 2: Ferdinand de Saussure has made distinction between *langue* and *parole*. Langue is the formal, grammatical system of language. Parole is actual speech, the way speakers use language.

Ans to Q No 3: The basic unit of language is sign which consists of signifier and signified.

Ans to Q No 4: Rules are generalized procedures that actors understand and use in various circumstances. Resources are facilities that actors used to get things done.

Ans to Q No 5: Signification, Legitimation and Domination.



4.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Define Post-structuralism.

Q 2: Mention two important characteristics of a model as put forth by Levi Strauss.

Q 3: Why social structure can be considered as model?

B) Long questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Discuss about Saussures's contribution to structural linguistic.

Q 2: Critically discuss the theory of Structuralism.

Q 3: What do you understand by duality of structure? Discuss.

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UNIT 5: CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Georg Simmel's Conflict Perspective

5.4 Conflict Functionalism of Lewis Coser

5.5 Dialectic Sociology of Ralf Dahrendorf

5.6 Analytic Conflict Theory of Randall Collins

5.7 Let Us Sum Up

5.8 Further Reading

5.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.10 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- learn about the conflict perspective to understand society
- explain the idea of conflict as advocated by Georg Simmel
- discuss Lewis Coser's perspective on Conflict
- describe Ralf Dahrendorf's and Randall Collin's idea on conflict.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

Conflict theory emerged as the primary alternative to functionalism. It is important to mention that Functionalism is a dominant mode of sociological analysis but conflict theory is still in its infancy stage. Conflict theory began as a development from the Marxian tradition. The conflict theory generally views society as a system of social structures and relationships that are shaped mainly by economic forces. Conflict theorists assume that social life revolves around the economic interest of the wealthy and that these people use their economic power to coerce others to accept their view of the society. Secondly, as there is power differential among individuals of social classes, hostility, resentment etc. are constant elements of society for which conflict is inevitable.

There are two distinct traditions of conflict theory in the classical works. The power relation tradition of political philosophy and the tradition of competitive struggle. The sociological theory of conflict is a combination of both these traditions. C. Wright Mills, Ralf Dahrendorf, Lewis Coser, Herbert Murcuse, Randall Collins, Georg Simmel and Andre Gunder Frank are among the prominent conflict theorists of contemporary times. Sociologists, have identified two categories of conflict: Exogenous conflict and endogenous conflict. Conflict theory is perhaps the prime area in sociological theory where general theoretical principles are fairly well supported by empirical research. In the previous unit we have discussed about the Structuralist Approach to understand society. In this unit we shall try to understand the prespectives put forward by different scholars belonging to the Conflict School of Thought.

5.3 GEORG SIMMEL'S CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE

The modern conflict theory actually began with the work of Georg Simmel and was revised by Lewis Coser. Simmel was interested in the 'web of conflict' or the cross cutting allegiances that can both bind a society together and also create antagonism and confrontation. He focused mainly on the positive function of conflict. He views conflict as a variable that manifests different states of intensity or violence. The polar ends of this variable are competition and fight. Competition is a form of interaction in which opposing parties seek to accomplish the same goals within the framework of socially approved rules. On the other hand, fight denotes the less regulated and more direct combative activities of parties against each other.

According to Simmel, conflict is not opposite to social order rather, it is an intense form of interaction. Very often it brings people more close and together than normal social order. For example conflict with outside group enhances the unity of the in group by strengthening group sentiment, loyalty and conformity to norms. He viewed that a particular conflict situation may be ruinous for the individual, but may be advantageous to the community as a whole because conflict promotes system integration and adaptation.

In addition, conflict between groups is a major determinant of the development of group organization. The increased level of organization within conflict groups enables them to realize many of their goals without violence and such realization of goals cuts down internal system tension and promotes integration.

Simmel has rejected the notion that conflict is a temporary phase which is eventually transformed to unity, and has insisted that peace and conflict are reciprocally intertwined in historical reality. Sometimes conflict transformes into peace and sometimes peace transformes into conflict.

Simmel has made some suggestions for the execution of conflict. These are as follows:

- Disappearance of the object of conflict.
- Victory, which results from the superiority of one party over the other.
- Compromise, in this case the two parties agree to divide the object of conflict.
- Conciliation.

In addition to these measures Simmel has made some propositions on the functions of conflict for the conflict parties and for the systemic whole in which conflict occurs. His propositions on the functions of conflict for the parties are as follows:

- The more violent are inter group hostilities, the more frequent is conflict among groups, the less likely are group boundaries to disappear.
- The more violent is the conflict, the less integrated is the group, the more likely is despotic centralization of conflict groups.
- The more violent is the conflict, the greater will be their internal solidarity.

Simmel's propositions on the functions of conflict for the whole are as follows:

- The less violent is the conflict between groups of different degree of power in a system, the more likely is the conflict to have integrative consequences for the social whole.
- The more violent and the more prolonged are conflict relations between groups, the more likely is the formation of coalitions among previously unrelated groups in a system.

- The more prolonged is the threat of violent conflict between groups, the more enduring are the coalitions of each of the conflict parties.

5.4 CONFLICT FUNCTIONALISM OF LEWIS COSER

Coser was very much influenced by the work of Simmel for which he has given much attention on conflict aspects of society. He has criticized Parsons's functionalism for not addressing the issue of conflict and also criticized other conflict theorists for overlooking the positive aspects of conflict. His major work on conflict theory, *The Functions of Social Conflict (1956)*, is an attempt to develop Simmel's theory of conflict. The conflict theory of Simmel and Coser presents a series of principles by which conflict lead to the integration of society. Both of them tried to show that conflict does not always lead to social change, rather conflict can be the basis of social order. In his work *The Functions of Social Conflict (1956)*, Coser related conflict to the social world and discussed how conflict can lead to social change, and paid close attention to the role of people's emotion in conflict. Coser viewed that although conflict always exists in society, society also consists of degrees of consensus.

Coser defined conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aim of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals". According to him conflict often leads to social change, stimulates innovation, and during the time of external and internal threat, it leads to an increase in the centralization of power. In his book he has presented a number of arguments regarding the intensity, duration, causes and functions of conflict.

Combining Simmel's and Marx's ideas, Coser maintained that withdrawal of legitimacy from an existing system of inequality is the critical precondition of conflict. And when the deprivations of subordinates are transformed from absolute to relative, the greater will be their sense of injustice and hence they are more likely to initiate conflict. He has also mentioned some important arguments regarding the intensity or violence of conflict. These are as follows:

- When more groups are engaged in conflict over realistic issues (realistic conflict), the more likely are they to seek compromises over the means to realize their interests and hence less violent is the conflict. Since realistic conflicts centere around specific goals, the attainment of those goals is more important than the destruction of the enemy.
- When groups engage more in conflict over nonrealistic issues, the level of emotional excitement and involvement in the conflict is greater, for which the conflict is more violent.

According to Coser violence and conflict are often interlinked and violence performs some important social functions. First is violence as achievement. Causing violence is an achievement for some people and the more violence they cause, the more they achieve in their own minds. Secondly violence often alerts society and its members to underlying problems that need to be corrected.

In addition to all these, most importantly Coser's approach to conflict focused on its various functions. Like Simmel, Coser divided the functions of conflict for i) the respective parties of conflict and ii) the systemic whole in which conflict occurs.

- Coser's propositions regarding the functions of conflict for the respective parties are accordingly :
  - When the conflict is more violent, the boundaries of each respective conflict party are more clear cut.
  - When the conflict is more violent and the conflict parties are more internally differentiated, each conflict party is more likely to centralize its decision making process.
  - When the conflict is more violent, the more it is supposed to affect the welfare of all segments of the conflict parties, and the conflict promotes more structural and ideological solidarity among members of each conflict party.
  - The more violent the conflict is the more conflict leads to the suppression of dissent and deviance within each conflict party as well as forced conformity to norms and values.
  - The more the conflict between parties leads to forced conformity,

the greater is the accumulation of hostilities, and is internal group conflict is more likely to surface in the long run.

- Coser's propositions regarding the functions of conflict for the social whole are accordingly:
  - The more differentiated and functionally interdependent are the units in a system, the more likely is conflict to be frequent but with low degrees of intensity and violence.
  - The more frequent are conflicts, the less is their intensity, and lower is their level of violence, then the more likely are conflicts in a system to a) increase the level of innovation of system units b) release hostilities before they polarize system units c) promote normative regulation of conflict relations, d) increases awareness of realistic issue e) increases the number of associative coalitions
  - More conflict, promote levels of innovation, release hostilities, normative regulation, awareness of realistic issues and associative coalitions, then greater will be the level of internal social integration of the system, and the greater will be its capacity to adapt to its external environment.

Conflict serves as an important agent in establishing full ego identity, autonomy and differentiation of personality from the outside world. Conflict with other groups increases a group's consciousness and awareness of separateness and establishes boundaries between groups. According to Coser, Conflict allows expression of hostility and the restoration of strained relationship. It leads to the elimination of specific sources of conflict between the parties and enables redressal of grievances through the establishment of new norms or the affirmation of new ones. Social conflict creates boundaries between different groups, which create a strong unity between the individual members of the group. Social conflict not only promotes cohesion in individual groups, but also promotes coalitions and associations with outside groups; they bring technological improvements, revitalize the economy and lubricate the social system. Above all they facilitate the release of tension and frustration and enable the social system to adjust itself.

5.5 DIALECTIC SOCIOLOGY OF RALF DAHRENDORF

Before discussing Dahrendorf's conflict theory it is necessary to have a brief description of dialectical sociology. Dialectical sociology is the organized study of social conflict which entails a conceptualization of opposing forces with conflicting interests. The dialectical model begins with a dichotomy of opposites such as slave and master, rich and poor etc. Dahrendorf's conceptualization is a dialectical model because he saw conflict as inherent in the dichotomous division of all social organizations into contending categories of roles- those who have authority and those who are subjected to authority which we will discuss in detail.

Dahrendorf referred to his conflict theory as the coercion theory of society which he has discussed in his major work *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. He disagrees with Marx that economic forces are the sole determinant of conflict in society. His aim was to develop a theory which would revise Marx to account for the shape of modern society. His conflict theory is centered around the concept of power and authority. According to Dahrendorf power and authority are scarce resources and differential distribution of power and authority becomes the basis of conflict.

Dahrendorf maintained that the social world is composed of social organizations which are imperatively coordinated associations rather than social system. This social organization is characterized by power relations with clusters of roles having power over others or we can say that authority structure is an inseparable part of every social organization. It is important to mention here that authority structure always involves relations of super-ordination and subordination which define rights and obligations. Where there are authority relations, the super-ordinate element controls the subordinate elements which clearly signify the unequal distribution of authority. The unequal distribution of authority creates a dichotomy of positions of domination and subjugation. Some are entrusted with legitimate right (authority) to exercise control over others.

According to Dahrendorf, the structural organization of society and groups is so designed that *"some positions are entrusted with a right to*

exercise control over other positions in order to ensure effective coercion; it means that there is a differential distribution of power and authority". The differential distribution of authority ultimately results in the formation of two dichotomous groups. Those in dominant position seek to maintain the status quo while those in subordinate positions seek change. A conflict of interest within any association is at least latent all the time, which means that legitimacy of authority is always precarious. The interest of superordinates and subordinates are objective in the sense that they are reflected in the expectations attached to position. Individuals are adjusted or adopted to their roles when they contribute to conflict between superordinates and subordinates. Dahrendorf called these unconscious role expectations 'latent interests'. Manifests are those latent interests that have become conscious. He saw the analysis of connection between latent and manifest interests as a major task of conflict theory. Dahrendorf also distinguished three broad types of groups. The first is the quasi group (persons who share similar position in one of the many possible line of conflict), second is the interest group, they are the real agent of group conflict. They have a structure, a form of organization, a goal and personnel of members. Out of all the many interest groups emerge conflict groups, or those that actually engage in group conflict.

Dahrendorf suggested that authority is not bound by property rights and believed that *"class conflict is best seen as arising out of a dispute over distribution of authority in a given authority structure"* (Lopreato 1967: 281). Since every social organization is an imperatively co-ordinated association and the structure of authority is the sole basis of conflict, it is not possible to wither away conflict. Since differential distribution of authority is the fundamental source of conflict, changes resulting from class conflict are essentially changes in the authority system.

Dahrendorf has made some important propositions regarding the nature and consequences of conflict.

- The better organized the conflict group, the less violent is the conflict.
- Absolute deprivation leads to more violent conflict and relative deprivation results in less violent conflict.

- The more violent the conflict the more rapid the social change is.

Dahrendorf's conflict theory is not free from criticism. It has been criticized by many theorists. Collins viewed that his second proposition which we have mentioned above is not correct. Dahrendorf offers no evidence for it and it would seem from studies of revolutionary movements that violent conflict does not break out where the lowest class is most oppressed, but where it has the resources to mobilize itself. According to Collins his third proposition is also dubious Many violent transfers of political power produce no social change at all.

5.6 ANALYTIC CONFLICT THEORY OF RANDALL COLLINS

Randall Collins was influenced by great sociological thinkers like Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Mead and Goffman etc. Karl Marx played an important role in the development of Collins's work. Collins portrayed Marx as "the great originator" of conflict theory. Though he did not agree with the entire Marxian thought, he agreed with the Marxian concept of the material world and the formation of division of labour. Collins adopted Weber's pluralistic model using an analytic framework, comparative historical approach. His conflict approach to stratification, which has drawn from phenomenological and ethno methodological theories, is an attempt to develop an integrated theory of social conflict. In his conflict theory Collins attempted to bridge the micro-macro division that exists within sociological perspective. Collins incorporated the idea of Marx and Weber and their analysis of the effect of the economic and political institutions on individuals' behaviour. His focus on individuals and their inner struggles reveals a micro-orientation. According to Collins:

> " Conflict theory is not concerned only with overt conflict and social change. It is a perspective on all aspects of society and on social order in all its forms. The conflict theory on social organization is a theory of stratification. Societies are not merely differentiated; differences among individuals and groups are generally forms of inequality which are produced by differences in resources and

represent the pursuit of conflicting interests. Conflict theory proposes that the various forms of social organizations can be explained as parts of theoty of stratification".

Collins chooses to focus on social stratification because it is an institution that touches many features of life including wealth, politics careers, families, clubs, communities, lifestyles. Collins believed that Marx's analysis of stratification was too limited. Marx was primarily interested in determinants of political power and what may be called as 'theory of stratification'. He criticized Marxian theory as monocausal explanation for a multi causal world". Collins prefered Weber's notion of stratification which includes political power and social prestige to Marx's economic determinism.

Collins contended that power and status are fundamental relational dimensions at the micro level of social interaction. Whatever else may be going on in social life, and however else one may wish to conceptualize it, human actors are deeply involved in relational issues of power and status and social theorists of all persuasions have dealt with these in one form or another. Collins assumed that there are certain scarce goods like power, wealth and prestige. Individuals strive to maximize their share of the scarce commodities. In this process those who possess a greater share of the goods, try to consolidate their position, maximize their interests and dominate the structural arrangements by various means, especially coercion. But all people dislike being ordered by someone and therefore try their best to avoid subordinate roles. Therefore conflict is inevitable, for everyone is in pursuit of scarce resources and the roles related to these desired resources. According to Collins violent coercion and ability to force others to behave in a certain way are the primary basis of conflict.

Ritzer viewed that Collins's conflict approach to stratification can be reduced to three basic principles. These are accordingly:

- People live in self constructive subjective world.
- Other people may have the power to affect, or even control, an individual's subjective experience.
- People frequently try to control the actions of others who oppose such attempts of control resulting often in interpersonal conflict. On the

basis of these principles, Collins developed five principles of conflict analysis.

- Conflict theory must focus on real life rather than abstract formulations.
- Material arrangements affect interaction.
- In social situation of inequality between persons, those who possess the power position generally attempt to exploit those who lack resources.
- The role of cultural phenomenan such as beliefs, values, norms must be examined in terms of their relationship to interests, resources, and power.
- There must be a firm commitment to the scientific study of stratification and every other aspect of the social world.

However, in addition to social stratification Collins sought to extend his conflict theory to other social domains. He also looked at formal organization from a conflict perspective. He analyzed a wide range of social phenomena on the basis of a general assumption of conflicting interests of the parties involved, their location, available resources and options. Collins does not rely exclusively on any of the several pioneers of conflict theory.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What are the two distinct traditions of conflict theory in the classical works?

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Q 2: Define conflict.

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Q 3: According to Simmel conflict is advantageous to the community as a whole. Why?

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Q 4: Name the major work of Coser on conflict.

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Q 5: What is dialectical sociology?

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Q 6: What is the primary basis of conflict according to Collins?

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5.7 LET US SUM UP

- Conflict theory generally views society as a system of social structures and relationships that are shaped mainly by economic forces.
- There are two distinct traditions of conflict theory in the classical works. The power relation tradition of political philosophy and the tradition of competitive struggle. The sociological theory of conflict is a combination of both these traditions.
- The modern conflict theory actually began with the work of Georg Simmel and was revised by Lewis Coser.
- According to Simmel conflict is not opposite to social order rather it is an intense form of interaction. Very often it brings people more closely together than normal social order.
- Simmel has rejected the notion that conflict is a temporary phase which is eventually transformed in to unity, and has insisted that peace and conflict are reciprocally intertwined in historical reality.
- Coser was very much influenced by the work of Simmel for which he has given much attention on conflict aspects of society. He has criticized Parsons's functionalism for not addressing the issue of conflict and also criticized other conflict theorists for overlooking the positive aspects of conflict.

- According to Coser conflict allows expression of hostility and the restoration of strained relationship. It leads to the elimination of specific sources of conflict between the parties and enables redressal of grievances through the establishment of new norms or the affirmation of new ones.
- Dahrendorf's conceptualization of conflict is a dialectical model because he saw conflict as inherent in the dichotomous division of all social organizations into contending categories of roles- those who have authority and those who are subjected to authority.
- According to Dahrendorf power and authority are scarce resources and differential distribution of power and authority becomes the basis of conflict.
- Since differential distribution of authority is the fundamental source of conflict, changes resulting from class conflict are essentially changes in the authority system.
- Collins's conflict approach to stratification has drawn from phenomenological and ethno methodological theories which is an attempt to develop an integrated theory of social conflict. He attempted to bridge the micro-macro division that exists within sociological perspectives.
- According to Collins violent coercion and ability to force others to behave in a certain way are the primary bases of conflict.



5.8 FURTHER READING

1) Abraham M. Francis. (2006). *Modern Sociological Theory An Introduction.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
2) Abraham M. Francis and John Henry Morgan. (2007). *Sociological Thought*. Delhi, Banglore: Macmillan India Ltd.
3) Collins, Randall. (2004). *Theoretical Sociology*. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publication.
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Historical and Social Context. Jaipur, New Delhi, Guwahati: Rawat Publication.

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6) Delaney, Tim. (2008). *Contemporary Social Theory Investigation and Application*. New Delhi: Pearson Education.

7) Lopreto, Joseph. (1967). "Class Conflict and the Images of Society". *The Journal of Conflict Resolution.* 11(3):281-293.

8) Ritzer, Georg. (2008). *Modern Sociological Theory*. Mc Graw Hill.

9. Turner, Jonathan H. (2005). *The Structure of Sociological Theory*. Jaipur: Rawat Publication.



5. 9 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The power relation tradition of political philosophy and the tradition of competitive struggle.

Ans to Q No 2: Conflict is an intense form of interaction. It brings people more closely together than normal social order.

Ans to Q No 3: According to Simmel conflict may be advantageous to the community as a whole because it promotes system integration and adaptation.

Ans to Q No 4: The Functions of Social Conflict,1956.

Ans to Q No 5: Dialectical sociology is the organized study of social conflict which entails a conceptualization of opposing forces with conflicting interests.

Ans to Q No 6: According to Collins the primary basis of conflict is violent coercion.



5.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Why Simmel considered conflict as functional to the society?

Q 2: What are the important functions of violence?

Q 3: What are the four basic principles of Collin's conflict approach?

Q 4: Distinguish between latent and manifest interests.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: 'Conflicts lead to the integration of society'. Elucidate the statement.

Q 2: Critically discuss Dahrendorf's theory of conflict.

Q 3: Discuss Collins's conflict approach to stratification. How is it different from Marxian conflict approach?

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UNIT 6: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AND ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Elements of Symbolic Interactionism and its basic principles.

6.4 Mead's Approach to Symbolic Interactionism

6.5 Blumer's Approach to Symbolic Interactionism

6.6 Criticism of Symbolic Interactionism

6.7 Garfinkel's Approach to Ethnomethodology

6.8 Let Us Sum Up

6.9 Further Reading

6.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.11 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand the symbolic Interactionism perspective
- be familiar with the scholars associated with the symbolic interactionsim perspective
- explain the criticisms to symbolic interactionism
- discuss the basics of ethnomethodology.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

It has been more than 70 years since the perspective of symbolic interactionism was first developed. While the earlier sociological traditions had a very clear handprint of European scholars, symbolic interactionism was the first 'distinctively American sociological theory', as Blumer put it. Some of the most important theorists associated with symbolic interactionism are George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, Charles Cooley and W.I. Thomas.

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical framework related to the micro- level interactions between individual and the way in which society is created and maintained through these repeated interactions. Mead's work on self and society is the key literature that lies at the foundation of the theory of symbolic interactionism. Before this theory, the dominant theories in Sociology focused on macro level institutions and social structures. Thus, these approaches had a 'top-down' perspective on the relationship between structures and individuals, focusing on how the structures constrain the individuals. Directly deviating from this strand of dominant thought, symbolic interactionism's approach was one of 'bottom-up', focussing instead on micro-processes that surface in the daily interaction of the individuals and how these are the key elements in the quest to understand society. Contrary to the idea that macro structures constrain, and ultimately define the individual, in symbolic interactionism, the individual emerges as agentic and autonomous as well as being integral to the formation of their social world.

The use of language and symbols in communication assumes centrality in symbolic interactionism. The attention here is not on how social institutions objectively define and impact individuals but rather on the question of the varied subjective interpretations of meanings and symbols by individuals and the way that they make sense of their world. The shift in theorization is from objective structures to subjective meanings.

In the previous unit we have tried to understand conflict perspective to understand society. In this unit we shall discuss the Symbolic Interactionist perspective and also try to understand Ethenometrodology as an approach to study society.

6.3 ELEMENTS OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AND ITS BASIC PRINCIPLES

Blumer coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and the three premises articulated by him are central to understanding this theoretical perspective:

- The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them
- The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.
- The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he [or she] encounters.

Along with the above three premises forwarded by Blumer, there are other implicit assumptions that are central to this perspective and form its foundational philosophy. We will briefly discuss them below

- *People have symbolic capacities*, which means that they have the ability to use symbols and to give meanings to them. Human beings do not just react to stimuli but are able to give meaning to them and subjectively interpret this stimuli experience before acting in terms of the interpreted meanings. So, language becomes a very important tool for this.
- *Interactions are central to becoming human.* Symbolic interactionists do not believe that people are born humans but rather that people become humans and acquire human qualities through interactions with others. These human qualities like, to understand symbols, to speak, to think and make plans, to understand roles and the idea of the self, etc. are not biologically given but rather have to be learned through interactions with other humans.
- *People are thinking and conscious beings with the agency to shape their own behaviour.* As mentioned in the above point, people develop their minds and their sense of self through their interactions in the community and thus develop the capacity to think of oneself as an object and interact with themselves reflexively. This leads to there being some degree of autonomy and agency in one's behaviour. Instead of there being mere reactions to stimuli and objects, human beings are able to ascertain what objects and which stimuli they want to take into account.

- *People are purposive creatures.* As mentioned above, instead of merely reacting to stimuli, human beings instead act in and toward situations. We give meaning and interpret a given situation based on our interactions with others. As we come up with a 'definition of the situation', we can then determine in what ways to act in the given scenario. Though, such an interpretation of the situation might not be accurate or wise, human beings do act purposefully by appraising the situation at hand.
- *Society consists of human beings engaged in symbolic interaction.* Blumer conceived of society as a fluid but structured process. Thus, symbolic interactionists view this kind of process as depending on the ability of the individuals in the society to act purposively with each other but also to be able to presume each other's perspectives and be able to co-ordinate their unfolding acts with the others through symbolic communication and interpretation. Thus, even though the meanings to be attributed to symbols might be predetermined in a given society, human beings still have the ability to exercise their agencies since society is a product of the joint acts people engage in together.
- *To understand people's social acts, we need to understand the meanings people give to these acts.* Symbolic interactionists stress the importance of understanding the world of meanings and the ways in which this can differ across different cultures and societies. Thus, in order to understand any society, one would need to understand the world of meanings there. Thus, symbolic interactionism also calls for sociological methods that would provide a view into the inner world of meanings of groups or societies under investigation. For this insider's view, the researcher must then 'take the role of' or be empathetic to the groups they are studying.Thus, researchers that use the symbolic interactionist perspective are more likely to use qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or participant observation, because they seek to understand the symbolic worlds in which their research subjects live.

6.4 MEAD'S APPROACH TO SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Mead can be called the central figure in the development of the ideas that formed the perspective of symbolic interactionism. Though he published little in his lifetime, his lectures had a profound effect for theorizing in sociology. Posthumously published, his books Mind, Self and Society (1934), The Philosophy of the Act (1938) and The Philosophy of the Present (1959), contain the central tencts that influenced the foundational ideas of symbolic interactionism. Some of the key figures who influenced Mead's work were pragmatists Charles Peirce and William James, the sociologists Charles Horton Cooley and James Mark Baldwin, Sigmund Freud as well as Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

Mead developed a groundbreaking theory that the self arises from communication, interaction and role-taking. For Mead, both 'mind' and 'self' are in nature, social and language is the vital factor in the formation of these. Along with this, the individuals have the ability to be reflexive and reflect on themselves as an object that they have agency over. The perception of others also is very important and this perception of others has an impact on the individual's perception of himself or herself. Mead stated, `The organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self' (is the 'generalized other' which is how society is perceived as in the mind of the individual.

Mead drew the differences between the 'I' and the 'me', which are the two different processes into which the 'self' breaks down while in the process of social interaction. While the 'I' is impulsive: a spontaneous response of the self to the external world, the 'me' is more organized response devised by the self, having interpreted meanings from the actions of the others.

6.5 BLUMER'S APPROACH TO SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Herbert Blumer was a student of Mead and he became the most important proponent of his ideas. Championing Mead's theories and applying

them in his own writings, Blumer published his book Symbolic Interactionism (1969), which became the most important piece of explicative scholarship on the perspective of symbolic interactionism, which is a term that Blumer coined in order to capture the essence of this theoretical perspective he was developing. Blumer taught at Chicago University and he had a major influence on a group of graduate students, which included Howard Becker, Erving Goffman, Helena Lopata, Anselm Strauss, Gregory Stone and Ralph Turner. This group was instrumental in propagating the symbolic interactionist perspective further and came to be known as the Second Chicago School.

In the words of Blumer himself, "The term `symbolic interaction' refers, of course, to the peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or `define' each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their `response' is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning that they attach to such actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions."

While in the case of Marxism or Functionalism, human behavior is seen as a product of 'stimulus response variables' such as class, Blumer argued for a process of self-indication, where social change is a product of interpretation, which is not brought about by factors external to people. The only thing that precedes action is the process of interpretation. Human beings identify and give meaning to what they believe to be of significance in what they will do. Blumer argues that such an identification of something untangles it out of its setting and by doing so, provides it meaning. Human beings act on the basis of such symbolization, identifying meanings and significance for future actions.

6.6 CRITICISM OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

We can divide the criticisms against symbolic interactionism into two: the criticism from within symbolic interactionists and criticism from outside. The biggest criticism levied on symbolic interactionism from outside, is of course on its central focus on micro-processes and what the critics

perceive as it's lack of importance to macro structures and the ways in which the institutions influence social processes and outcomes.

Research done with this perspective is also often under critical scrutiny because it purports to interpretation of subjective meanings. The absence of objectivity or the difficulty in remaining objective while trying to study a society with an insider's perspective (as the methods of symbolic interactionism suggests) is also perceived as a weakness. Others criticize the extremely narrow focus of symbolic interaction since its focus is on micro processes and not macro structures. But of course, the proponents of symbolic interactionism would consider the very same points as its strength.

The criticism from within symbolic interactionism is characterised by the four main schools of thought that have been identified under the umbrella of symbolic interactionism: the Chicago school, the Iowa/Indiana school, ethnomethodology, and dramaturgy. This strand of criticism aims to correct some of the perceived shortcomings of this perspective and sharpen it further to be of use to the researcher studying society and social actions. A rich body of scholarship has emerged because of the critical appraisal of symbolic interactionism by the researchers engaged within it.

Through the years, there have been many schools of thoughts within symbolic interactionism which have ensured that the application of this perspective has been done in a wide range of fields and its impact has been felt across divergent areas of research. Ethnomethodology, phenomenology, dramaturgy as well as many relevant works on identity and social roles have leaned on symbolic interactionist perspective for their theoretical underpinnings. Along with this, in the sub-field of cultural studies, use of narratives as sociological method, feminist scholarship and studies on deviance and post-modernism have benefitted from the symbolic interactionist perspective.

6.7 GARFINKEL'S APPROACH TO ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

Ethnomethodology has remained outside mainstream sociological theories but has largely held its ground. This sociological perspective was

developed by Harold Garfinkel and has its roots in Alfred Schutz's work which was instrumental in the development of phenomenological sociology which analysed everyday life- or lifeworld, and the uniquely human character of social interaction which shapes everyday world, instead of taking it for granted as something already given.

The ethnomethodological perspective emerged as a reaction to the mainstream sociological perspectives of that time, which imposed a set of sociological categories on the ordinary individual. Sociological theories re-interpret the experiences of the ordinary people in the process of theorizing, thereby giving the impression of the deficiency of the ordinary person's account. Thus, sociological theorizing can deviate far away from what ordinary people would consider as being their realities. For example, 'structure' as defined by the structural functionalists might be unrecognizable and un-relatable to an ordinary person's idea of it. Thus ethnomethodology seeks to amend this gap and proposes to investigate how individuals ('members') themselves construct their world.

In the words of Garfinkel himself here, the "central recommendation is that the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making those settings "account-able." The "reflexive," or "incarnate" character of accounting practices and accounts make up the crux of that recommendation".The assumption here is that there is a general orderliness in society and the members of the society produce this sort of orderliness reflexively. Members in the society have to continuously be engaged in making sure that their activities make sense to others while also accurately ascertaining the meanings in the activities of the others. There is a shared method in the society in order to ensure that there is a structure to the interaction that happens between individuals, which is possible because of the reflexivity exercised by individuals in taking account of their interactions with others.Thus, the focus here is on the methods used by people in everyday life to account for (or make sense of) their activities – both to themselves and others.

Garfinkel's chosen research methods have been very ground

breaking in Sociology. He would send his students out to the field to perform a variety of exercises. One of these exercises was to ask 'What do you mean?' relentlessly during conversations, which lead to questioning the very fluidity of meaning itself.He was also a proponent of conversation analysis, which studied social interaction using both verbal and non-verbal cues. These studies in conversation analysis would show how much of meaning in social interaction is created by assumption of shared knowledge of covert cues between speakers, which might not make any sense when read by someone without any such shared knowledge.

Another method that he used was known as 'breaching experiment' where he tested social norms and social conformity by the researcher themselves breaching these social norms and boundaries by creating out of the normal situations and behaving awkwardly. The participants, except for the researcher, are unaware of such a deliberate breach and the resulting responses of anger, laughter, frustration or embarrassment was studied by the ethnomethodologist, in order to find out how these subtle or even obvious, societal rules and norms not only influenced behavior but also shaped social order

A common criticism of ethnomethodology is that it does not tell us anything very important. The focus on the everydayness of individuals means that big political or economic events are kept outside the domain of this perspective. Its detractors have declared this as its biggest weakness. Another criticism is that ethnomethodology does not provide us with any new knowledge and its findings are too simplistic or things that are already known.

Today, ethnomethodology is not prominent perspective in sociology but it has left its indelible mark on the discipline by questioning many taken-for-granted assumptions about 'meanings' and the everyday world. It is not as controversial anymore and many ethnomethodological insights have made its ways into the current sociological understanding of social action and social structure.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who coined the phrase symbolic interactionism?

.....

.....

Q 2: Do symbolic interactionists study micro level processes or macro level processes?

.....

.....

Q 3: Which research technique is a symbolic interactionist most likely to use?

.....

.....

Q 4: Do symbolic interactionists believe in being subjective or objective in studying society?

.....

.....

Q 5: Who are the central figures in the development of the symbolic interactionist perspective?

.....

.....

Q 6: Who developed the perspective of ethnomethodology?

.....

.....



6.8 LET US SUM UP

- Symbolic interactionism was the first distinctively American sociological theory
- Some of the most important theorists associated with symbolic

interactionism are George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, Charles Cooley and W.I. Thomas.

- Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical framework related to the micro-level interactions between individual and the way in which society is created and maintained through these repeated interactions.
- The structural functionalist approach had a 'top-down' perspective on the relationship between structures and individuals, focusing on how the structures constrain the individuals. Directly deviating from this strand of dominant thought, symbolic interactionism's approach was one of 'bottom-up', focussing instead on micro-processes that surface in the daily interaction.
- The attention of symbolic interactionism is not on how social institutions objectively define and impact individuals but rather on the question of the varied subjective interpretation of meanings and symbols.
- People have symbolic capacities.
- Interactions are central to becoming humans.
- People are thinking and conscious beings with the agency to shape their own behaviour.
- People are purposive creatures.
- Society consists of human beings engaged in symbolic interaction.
- To understand people's social acts, we need to understand the meanings people give to these acts.
- Mead developed a groundbreaking theory that the self arises from communication, interaction and role-taking. For Mead, both 'mind' and 'self' are in nature, and language is the vital factor in the formation of these.
- Blumer argued for a process of self-indication, where social change is a product of interpretation, which is not brought about by factors external to people. The only thing that precedes act is the process of interpretation.
- The biggest criticism levied on symbolic interactionism is on its central focus on micro-processes and it's non-prioritisation of macro structures and institutions.

- Ethnomethodology was developed by Harold Garfinkel and has its roots in Alfred Schutz's work.
- Ethnomethodology proposed to investigate how individuals ('members') themselves construct their world.
- The assumption here is that there is a general orderliness in society and the members of the society produce this sort of orderliness reflexively.



6.9 FURTHER READING

1) Blumer, Herbert (1962) 'Society as Symbolic Interaction', in A.M. Rose (ed.), *Human Behavior and Social Processes*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
2) Blumer, Herbert (1969) *Symbolic Interactionism*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
3) Cooley, Charles Horton ([1902] 1964) Human Nature and the Social Order. New York: Scribner's.
4) Mead, George H. (1934) *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
5) Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
6) Sandstorm, Kent. L, Martin, Daniel D. and Fine, Gary Alan (2003), 'Symbolic Interactionism at the End of the Century', in Ritzer, George and Smart, Barry (ed.), *Handbook of Social Theory*. London: Sage.



6.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Herbert Blumer coined the phrase 'symbolic interactionism'.

Ans to Q No 2: Symbolic interactionists study micro-level processes.

Ans to Q No 3: Researchers that use the symbolic interactionist perspective are more likely to use qualitative research methods, such as in-depth

interviews or participant observation, because they seek to understand the symbolic worlds in which their research subjects live.

Ans to QNo 4: Symbolic interactionists believe in being subjective as they aim to study the subjective interpretation of meanings.

Ans to QNo 5: The central figures in the development of the symbolic interactionist perspective are Blumer and Mead.

Ans to QNo6: Harold Garfinkel developed the perspective of ethnomethodology.



6.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Who are the important theorists associated with Symbolic interactionism and what contributions did they make?

Q 2: Going by Blumer's articulation, what are the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism?

Q 3: What is ethnomethodology in sociology?

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Along with the three premises forwarded by Blumer, what are the other implicit assumptions of the perspective of symbolic interactionism?

Q 2: Why is the micro level approach of symbolic interactionism relevant in studying society?

Q 3: What are some of the contributions made by the perspective of symbolic interactionism?

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UNIT 7: PHENOMENOLOGY

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Phenomenology: Definition and Characteristics

7.4 Phenomenology: Key Thinkers

7.5 Phenomenology as Method

7.6 Let Us Sum Up

7.7 Further Reading

7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

7.9 Model Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading going through this unit, you should be able to-

- understand what is phenomenology
- explain the significance of phenomenology as a theoretical concept and analytical tool
- discuss the limitations and advantages of phenomenology as a theoretical concept and analytical tool.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

Traditional theories in social science emphasised on a certain kind of detachment or a distance between the one who is studying and the one who is being studied. An objective understanding of the society was what the positivist approach to social sciences advocated for. In that process the positivist social scientists tried to find out a social science counterpart of the natural sciences. However, positivist approach had its own limitations because studying society is not similar to studying natural sciences. Human beings are not innate objects who react to external stimuli. They are social beings who 'behave' and 'act' rather than just 'react'. The reason and logic which drive the scientific spirit of natural sciences are also applicable to

social sciences, but the application of that spirit would be different in case of the latter. The scientific spirit of social sciences fundamentally takes into account objectivity, but it also has to take into account the norms, values and different subjectivities that can be observed to be present in human societies. Since it is human beings that social sciences aim to study, hence, the empirical and subjective experiences of the humans have to be considered and analysed while forming objective conclusions about human societies. It becomes important to understand how humans, the object of study for the social scientists, perceive their own world through their own worldview and form social realities around themselves. Negating their life experiences and their worldviews would provide an imperfect and half-baked understanding of human society and this is precisely where phenomenology as a theoretical concept comes in.

The primary aim of phenomenology is to understand the ways in which human beings construct and reconstruct meanings around them. The key concept here is intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity basically refers to a variety of interactions that human beings experience. The shared meanings that people construct in the process of their interaction with one another lead them to make their own sense of the world around them. The everyday lives of these people also play important roles in forming these meanings. Intersubjectivity thus works as an everyday resource using which human beings make sense of their social and cultural worlds. While talking about phenomenology, what is important to understand is that the meanings that get formed in the process of interaction among people need not be the same as what the social scientist would think them to be. For phenomenology, the experiences of the people are important not because of how they get interpreted by the social scientist, but because they exist independently of the latter's interpretation of them.

7.3 PHENOMENOLOGY: DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy defines phenomenology as the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from a first-person

point of view. In its literal sense, phenomenology is the study of phenomena. That means it studies occurrences as they appear in our experience. The way human beings experience things is thus the prime interest of phenomenology. As said above, it studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective point of view. The view in consideration is thus essentially the view of the first person. The structure of these experiences range from memory, perception, thought, emotion, desires, imagination, social activities, etc.

We had mentioned above in the introduction that the key component of understanding phenomenology is intersubjectivity. From a first person point of view, intersubjectivity comes in when we undergo acts of empathy. This means that intersubjective experiences are essentially empathetic experiences which are gained when we put ourselves in others' shoes. Also, it is important to note that while phenomenology acknowledges the subjective experiences of humans as rational ones, it argues that there are certain pre-existing beliefs that underlie the structure of this rationality. And these beliefs are there in our unconscious minds as we experience the world in its natural attitude. This argument has been put forward by Edmund Husserl who is considered to be one of the founding fathers of phenomenology. Husserl uses the term 'lifeworld' to refer to the way used by the members of one or more social groups to structure the world into objects.

As a philosophical concept phenomenology can be traced back to the pioneering work of Immanuel Kant and the long-term philosophical problem of how our knowledge of the world is based on our limited perceptions of it as these are filtered through the implicit schemas already in our minds. In a general sense we understand that our perceptions do not necessarily correspond precisely to the way the world really is. In everyday life, we unconsciously make allowances for the fact that the sounds and sights that register on our ears and eyes will vary according to our distance from their source. Kant's position was that in the final analysis it is impossible to know the world as it really is, in itself. Instead, all we can know is based on our perceptions of the world as they are filtered through our senses and

organized through our particular cognitive frameworks. As applied to Sociology this perspective reflects the notion that the way we see and interpret the world is based largely on the formative influence of our social environment. The cultural world into which we are born provides not only the language we use to communicate but also the perceptual categories and cognitive and interpretive frameworks through which we actually perceive and make sense of our world.

The fundamental objective of phenomenology are to study the phenomena, which is experienced in various acts of consciousness. In this sense there are two types of phenomena; mental and physical. Mental phenomena constitutes of what occurs in the mind when we experience something. They also include the acts of consciousness, or its contents. On the other hand, physical phenomena include the objects of external perception starting with colors and shapes. Phenomenology envisages isolating phenomena by suspending all consideration of their objective reality or subjective association. Here the phenomenologist is involved in a search for certainty. In this sense by equating phenomenology with philosophy, the latter is conceived as a rigorous science dealing with ideal objects or essences of things originating in the consciousness.

7.4 PHENOMENOLOGY: KEY THINKERS

- **Edmund Husserl:** Phenomenology as a branch of Philosophy owes its origin primarily to the work of Husserl. Edmund Husserl is considered to be the principal founder of phenomenology. He was one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th Century. His significant academic contribution ranged across almost all the areas of philosophy. His influence can further be seen in linguistics, sociology and cognitive psychology to quite an extent. His first phenomenological work, *Logical Investigations*, was published in two volumes around 1900.

Husserl conceived phenomenology in three important ways. Firstly, it was conceived as the science of sciences, which endeavoured to discover the basis of consciousness. In the second view, phenomenology was conceived as a first philosophy and therefore, it is coextensive with

philosophy, as traditionally it was the latter which had been enjoying the status of first philosophy. The third conception of phenomenology is the most important one, where it is conceived as a transcendental idealism. This view conceives the transcendental ego as the source of all meaning.

Husserl argued that phenomenology basically aims to study human phenomena without considering questions of their causes, their objective reality, or even their appearances. Husserl gave the concept of 'transcendental phenomenology' to throw light on how the objects surrounding our everyday life which we often take for granted as having natural and naive attitudes actually have structures that allow or enable them to constitute themselves into consciousness.

The phenomenological account of experience asserts two things. Firstly, it claims that everyday experiences are intentional. Secondly, it affirms that experiences always reveal their objects from a perspective. Hence the phenomenological account of intentionality reconciles the objectivism of intentionality with perspectivism of empiricism.

The primary aim of Husserl's phenomenology is to isolate the essential aspects which constitute meanings. In other words, it seeks to isolate the essences. Everything perceived is bound up with the essence of perception which is different from the object that exists in nature. Husserl argues that every intentional experience gives meaning. In other words, intentional experiences have the essential characteristic of giving some meaning. The fundamental aim of phenomenology is to grasp the perceived as such. It tries to grasp what is essentially given. The task of phenomenology is to capture the phenomenon as meant. Phenomenology searches for essences in the consciousness, which is the domain of essences. It searches for pure mental processes which are immanent to the sphere of consciousness that investigates them. The ultimate focus is on pure consciousness. The various mental processes like remembering, imagining, judging, willing, describing, feeling, perceiving etc. have their own essences. The phenomenological method examines these essences, by excluding what do not lie in the mental act itself. It thus builds a science of essences. In order to find the essence of consciousness, phenomenology excludes

what is non-essence. For this the major hurdle is the natural attitude, which a phenomenologist has to overcome.

- **Alfred Schutz:** Alfred Schutz attempted to bring in the thoughts of Edmund Husserl into social world and social sciences. His work *Phenomenology of the Social World* provided philosophical foundations to the sociological work of Max Weber. Schutz's basic aim was to look at the processes through which human beings build up the meaning of their own actions, and while doing this he looked at the structure of the social world. What he emphasised on was that human beings living in the same social environment constantly try to grasp one another's experience, and in doing so they already adopt the attitudes of social scientists towards one another.

Like Husserl, Schutz too argued that phenomenology has to be a rigorous scientific enterprise. For Schutz, the utmost reality is the intersubjective world of everyday life. However, the duty of scientists is to detach themselves from the everyday mundane practices of the life-world in order to better analyze and observe them. While actors in the real life-world obtain their knowledge through the experience of everyday life and an accumulated stock of life-worldly knowledge, scientists draw what they know from their existing stock of theoretical knowledge. Scientific temper and everyday life have to be considered as completely different worlds, separating common sense from scientific knowledge.

Schutz argued that in both everyday life and science, people resort to constructs or ideal types for interpreting and grasping the concerned reality. Social scientists also build their constructs or ideal types on the basis of the constructs of everyday life. This is called typification. Obtaining an objective science that is constituted by subjective meaning structures is made possible through typification. Schutz was thus primarily interested in constructing ideal types of social actors and actions. Ideal types, moreover, must meet certain criteria in order to meet the requirements of scientific rigor. Schutz propounded five such criteria for his ideal types: the postulates of relevance, adequacy, logical consistency, compatibility, and subjective interpretation.

Schutz criticized natural sciences as being dependent on basic

presupposition of appropriation. He argued that without understanding the object of study, i.e., social reality, one is bound to presuppose that the methods used by natural sciences are appropriate to its study. Schutz thus attempted to understand and clarify social reality and then to explain how actors make sense of their social realities by understanding each other's motives in typical terms. He argued that unlike experiments in natural sciences, such mutual understanding takes place without either somehow or other penetrating into the other's private, inner sanctum, or reducing the other to the status of animal organism responding to stimuli. Given this account of social reality, in which actors give meaning to their world, as opposed to physical reality whose objects (e.g., electrons, quarks) do not interpret their world, Schutz argued that the appropriate social scientific method is that which involves developing constructs of everyday actor's constructs.

It is crucial to note that Schutz viewed the life-world as having been created by the actions of people in the past. One's life-world, in other words, predates an individual's birth and is given to them to struggle with and attempt to transform. The life-world is therefore constraining, and people are always trying to shape or dominate it. Another important dimension of the life-world is knowledge. Schutz emphasized actors' knowledge of typifications and recipes, skills, and useful knowledge.

Schutz's work has to be seen as an attempt to construct a theoretical perspective that emphasizes on both how actors create their own social world and how the social world in turn impacts the actors.

7.5 PHENOMENOLOGY AS METHOD

Mainstream research methods in sociology and social anthropology have always been executed through a hierarchical relation between the researcher and the researched. In other words, dominant research methods have always used a 'view from the above', or a sense of privilege, ensuring a coloring of the claims to objectivity by value biases. Introducing reflexivity in research then attempts to bridge the gap between the researcher and researched. It refutes a universal social reality and acknowledges that

knowledge is situated and social reality is contextual. Reflexivity enables the researcher to critically engage with the research and makes one aware of one's own location as a researcher.

Any serious consideration of method in social science quickly runs into basic issues such as the relation between theory and empirical observation, and how we conceptualize phenomena. In turn, any reflection on these matters raises still more fundamental problems of objectivity, of the status of our knowledge. Phenomenology encompasses multiple perspectives. It is not a single unified philosophy or standpoint. As an approach, phenomenology proposes that a phenomenon be described instead of being explained and it focuses on the very things as they manifest themselves. It can be seen as a return to the lived world, the world of experience, which can be understood as a starting point of all sciences. Focusing on the very things means turning to the world of experience by taking into account that before any objective reality, there is a subject which experiences, before any objectivity there is a pre-given world and before any knowledge there is a life on which it is based. This means that any knowledge has its origin in experience which is pre-reflexive. The basic premise of phenomenology is thus that the perceiver determines meaning, and therefore it is human perception and not external influences or objects of the material world which is at the core of phenomenological analysis. It is human consciousness that determines their reality. Whatever appears in the human mind as it manifests itself in consciousness is the phenomenological project. Therefore, interpreting everyday life experience from a phenomenological view requires a close analysis of how ordinary human consciousness perceives its day-to-day life world.

Though phenomenology is criticized for being inherently individualistic and regressive in its preoccupation with individual perception rather than the material forces of power, domination, it can be of great use as an approach to get meaningful insights to the social phenomena where the presence of individual agency may have been ruled out while studying a particular phenomenon, in this case, the lived experience of menstruation. The deconstructionist critique also argues that in human consciousness

meaning is always colored or filtered, that adopting phenomenology as method can result in biased representation of meaning. But, to refute this criticism, phenomenology as a method approaches a particular phenomenon with a conscious awareness that human consciousness on one hand reveals idiosyncratic meanings, contingent truths, and felt-sensing perspectives that are born from materiality, power, and the complexity of presence, and on the other hand uncovers what it feels like to experience all these elements up close and personal. Phenomenology, thus, attempts to recognize and describe the role of consciousness in the achievement of knowledge. Its main contribution has been the manner in which it has steadfastly protected the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of any full understanding of nature of knowledge.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: a) Phenomenology is the study of _____.

b) The primary aim of phenomenology is to understand the ways in which human beings _____.

c) Phenomenology can be seen as a return to the _____.

d) The key component of understanding phenomenology is _____.

e) A phenomenon is experienced in various acts of _____.

f) There are two types of phenomena- _____ and _____.



7.6 LET US SUM UP

- Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from a first-person point of view.
- Phenomenology is the study of phenomena. That means it studies occurrences as they appear in our experience. The way human beings experience things is thus the prime interest of phenomenology.

- The primary aim of phenomenology is to understand the ways in which human beings construct and reconstruct meanings around them.
- Phenomenology can be seen as a return to the lived world, the world of experience, which can be understood as a starting point of all science.
- The key component of understanding phenomenology is intersubjectivity.
- Intersubjectivity basically refers to a variety of interactions that human beings experience.
- Intersubjective experiences are essentially empathetic experiences which are gained when we put ourselves in others' shoes.
- The basic premise of phenomenology is that the perceiver determines meaning, and therefore it is about human perception and not about external influences or objects of the material world.
- The fundamental objective of phenomenology is to study the phenomena, which are experienced in various acts of consciousness.
- There are two types of phenomena- mental and physical.
- Mental phenomena constitute of what occur in the mind when we experience something. They also include the acts of consciousness, or its contents.
- Physical phenomena include the objects of external perception starting with colors and shapes.
- Phenomenology approaches a particular phenomenon with a conscious awareness that human consciousness on one hand reveals idiosyncratic meanings, contingent truths, and felt-sensing perspectives that are born from materiality, power, and the complexity of presence, and on the other hand uncovers what it feels like to experience all these elements up close and personal.
- The main contribution of phenomenology has been the manner in which it has steadfastly protected the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of any full understanding of nature of knowledge.



7.7 FURTHER READING

1) Giorgi.(2008). Phenomenological Sociology and Ethnomethodology: The Everyday Life World of Common Sense. In: Contemporary Sociological Theory. New York : Springer

2) Madison, S. (2011). *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics and Performance*. Sage publications.

3) Marleau Ponty, M. (1945). *La Phenomenologie de la perception*. Gallimard, Paris, France : Routledge

4) Moran, D. (2000). *Introduction to Phenomenology*. Routledge.

5) Sadala, Maria. L.A., Adorno, Rubens de C.F. (2002). *"Phenomenology as a Method to Investigate the Experience of the Lived: a perspective from Husserl and Merleau Ponty's Thought." Journal of Advanced Nursing.*

6) Sayer, Andrew. (2010). *Method in Social Science, Routledge,* New York : Routledge

WEB RESOURCES

https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/

https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/husserl/

https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schutz/

http://nptel.ac.in/courses/109106051/Module%205/Chapter%2032.pdf



7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1:

a) Phenomena
b) construct and reconstruct meanings around them
c) Life world
d) Intersubjectivity
e) Consciousness
f) Mental; Physical



7.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: What is phenomenology? Briefly write about the types of phenomena.

Q 2: What is the key component of phenomenology? Describe briefly.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Briefly describe Husserl's phenomenology.

Q 2: Briefly describe Schut's approach to phenomenology.

Q 3: Reflexivity enables social scientists to critically engage with their research. Do you agree? Why?

Q 4: Discuss the role of phenomenology as an approach.

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UNIT 8: EMILE DURKHEIM AND SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Emile Durkheim: Early Life

8.4 Sociology as Science

8.5 The Division of Labour and Forms of Solidarity

8.6 The Study of Suicide

8.7 Theory of Religion

8.8 Systems of Classification

8.9 Let Us Sum Up

8.10 Further Reading

8.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.12 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand the contribution of Durkheim in sociological theory
- explain the positivist tradition propounded by Durkheim and the aspects associated with it
- discuss the concepts of religion, suicide, division of labour, and the rules as proposed by Durkheim.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Emile Durkheim is regarded as one of the founding fathers of Sociology. He was a French sociologist, social psychologist and philosopher. Durkheim was preoccupied with the acceptance of Sociology as a science. He refined positivism which was originally put forward by August Comte. He was also a major proponent of structural functionalism. Durkheim's major sociological works includes The Division of Labour in Society, Rules of

Sociological Method, Suicide, and The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. In the previous unit we have discussed about the phenomenological approach to understand society. In this unit we shall try to understand the contributions made by Emile Durkheim to sociology.

8.3 EMILE DURKHEIM: EARLY LIFE

David Emile Durkheim was born on April 15, 1858, in Epinal, capital town of the department of Vosges, in Lorraine to Melanie and Moise, a rabbi of Epinal, and the Chief Rabbi of the Vosges and Haute-Marne. Expected to become a devout rabbi, he began his education in a rabbinical school, but at an early age, he decided not to follow his family's rabbinical path, and changed school. He entered the Ecole Normale Superieure in 1879, at his third attempt. At the Normale, he was guided by Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, a classicist with a social scientific outlook, and wrote his Latin dissertation on Montesquieu and read August Comte and Herbert Spencer.

In 1882, Durkheim passed his aggregation, the competitive examination required for admission to the teaching staff of state senior secondary schools, or lycees and soon began to teach philosophy. In 1885 he left for Germany, studied Sociology in Marburg, Berlin and Leipzig and by the following year completed the draft of his 'The Division of Labour in Society', his doctoral dissertation. His articles on German social science and philosophy, which were influenced by the work of Wilhelm Wundt, a German psychologist, philosopher and a founding father of modern Psychology made him famous in France. He was appointed with the official title, Charge d'un Cours de Science Sociale et de Pedagogie at University of Bourdeaux in 1887 to teach the University's first social science course. He reformed the French school system and introduced the study of social science in its curriculum. In 1897, he founded L'Aannee Sociologique, the first French social science journal which aimed to publish and publicize the works of a growing number of students and collaborators who developed the sociological program. In 1897, he published 'Suicide', a case study offering a model of what the sociological monograph might look like. By

1902, he realised his ambition of attaining a prominent position in Paris by becoming the chair of education at the Sorbonne. In 1912, he published 'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life', which analysed religion as a social phenomenon. When World War I began, he devoted himself to the cause of national defence, organised committees for the publication documents on the war, to be sent to neutral countries to undermine German propaganda. By 1916, he became disillusioned about the consequence of a possible German defeat and the advantage it would give the conservative clerical party in France and became conscious of his Jewish origin. Durkheim died on 15th November, 1917.

8.4 SOCIOLOGY AS SCIENCE

The goal of Sociology is to gain knowledge about the nature of human organisation. With such knowledge, it is possible to interpret social events in ways that allow for an understanding of how and why these events occur. In the last few hundred years, a set of procedures called science has gained ascendance in many disciplines as the best way to accumulate knowledge of all phenomena in the universe. But such has not always been the case, and even today, when science pervades every aspect of our lives and our ways of looking at the world, there is still disagreement in sociology over just what kind of science, if any, Sociology can be. The founding father of Sociology, August Comte, recognised in the early 1800s that the status of a 'science of society' was precarious. To defend sociology from its critics and legitmise his claims that the emergence of sociology as a science was now possible, he posited a 'law of the three stages' which included: theological, metaphysical and the positivist stage.

For Durkheim, Sociology is a study of social facts. A social fact is 'a thing that is external to and coercive of the actor'. Because they are external, social facts cannot be investigated by introspection. For this one should use empirical research. A typical use of this methodology is found in his analysis of suicide. Durkheim used statistics on suicide rate to establish his argument that suicide is a social phenomenon. He refused alternative hypothesis because their predictions did not agree with the actual statistical

data. This is an admirable attempt of empirical research of society. According to Durkheim, social facts, institutions, beliefs and values of society, should be treated the same way as the objects and processes of the scientific world. He said these social facts can be objectively measured, quantified and statistically analysed, and from these methods correlation and causational relationships can be drawn, leading to scientific theories and explanations of society. Thus for Durkheim, society can be measured in the same way as the natural world.

Overall, there is a huge split between those who considere Sociology as a science and those who do not. Realists and positivists like Durkheim argue that by definition and the theories used therein, Sociology is a science, yet interpretivists and others put an extremely valid point that people and society cannot be measured like objects. Although Durkheim put across the theory of social facts, there are too many external and internal forces that create an indefinite number of variables that are extremely difficult to measure. Even though this can be attempted through scientific methods as positivists do, it cannot be an exact science. Sociology seems to be more of an impersonation of science. The fact that these problems exist in the first place shows that it is too flawed as a science to be categorised in the same way as a subject like Physics. In conclusion, although valuable, Sociology cannot be considered an exact or a natural science. It can only be seen as having scientific qualities.

8.5 THE DIVISION OF LABOUR AND FORMS OF SOLIDARITY

Economists prior to Durkheim' considered the division of labor and its progress to be a natural law of human societies. Without it, human societies would never progress, or so the economists believed. Durkheim tried to take this a step further to argue that the division of labor was not just a natural law, but a moral rule. That is, he argued that the division of labor created greater social cohesion or solidarity.

Durkheim started with the question. What is the function of division of labor? According to Adam Smith the function of division of labour would

be to get the advantages of civilization. Durkheim on this stated that if so, then it is not a moral rule since suicide and crime greatly increase with the division of labor.

He continued by noting that civilization, by itself, has no intrinsic value. It's only value consists in fulfilling certain human needs. Fulfilling needs would not mean anything if the need were created by civilization itself.

Durkheim further proceeds by questioning, 'does the division of labour satisfy any needs that it didn't create itself?'

For Durkheim, to answer this question, it is useful to consider the old saying, 'differences attract,' but, he twists it to include only those differences that complement each other instead of excluding. We seek in others what we lack in ourselves, and associations are formed wherever there is such a true exchange of services — in short where there is a division of labor. The function, then, of the division of labor is primarily moral, not economic (though there are, of course, economic results as well), it is the feeling of solidarity created in two or more persons.

Then Durkheim moves on by questioning to what degree does the solidarity produced by the division of labour contribute to the general cohesion of society?

To answer this question, Durkheim used an external symbol of solidarity, since it is otherwise "too indefinite to easily understand". This he called law. Laws, Durkheim argued, can be categorized by type of sanction:

- **Repressive sanctions** (penal laws): with these laws, some loss or suffering is inflicted on the agent
- **Restitutive sanctions** (civil, commercial, administrative law): these sanctions just seek to return things to the way they were before the infraction.

These two types of sanction corresponded with the two types of solidarity:

- **Mechanical Solidarity**
  - characterized by repressive sanctions.
  - This type of solidarity is based on the attraction of like for like.
  - We react aggressively against those ideas and sentiments which

contradict our own. This links the individual to the social order - by virtue of his or her resemblance to others.

- Mechanical Solidarity is solidarity "deriving from resemblances, binding the individual directly to society.

- Anything that offends collective sentiments in turn offends the collective itself, weakens society – that's why even "victimless" crimes need to be punished.

- Punishment needed not just to deter actors, but to reaffirm the power of the collective conscience.

- Punishment protects society by producing atonement.

- **Organic Solidarity**
  - characterized by laws with restitutive sanctions
  - Laws with restitutive sanctions must not have a strong source in the collective conscience. Instead, they have a source in the division of labor.
  - Goal is to restore the status quo.
  - Presumes the differences of individuals - there has to be a sphere of action peculiar to the individual for these sanctions to exist.
  - That is, the *conscience collective* must leave part of the individual conscience untouched. The more the individual conscience is expanded, the greater the cohesion produced from this kind of solidarity.

For any particular society, then, the ratio of laws with repressive sanctions to those with restitutive sanctions should be the same as the conscience collective to the division of labor.

More "civilized" societies, Durkheim found, did, in fact, have fewer repressive sanctions - except for those types of repressive sanctions that protect the individual. Thus, the individual becomes the new religion - the last remaining piece of the collective conscience is the sanctity of the individual.

- **Causes of the Division of Labor:**

The main cause of division of labour according to Durkheim was

due to an increase in dynamic or moral density:

- smaller geographic distance between members of a society
- smaller technological distance between members of a society
- sheer social volume of a society.

These factors make the struggle for existence more acute. The only way to survive, Durkheim argued was differentiation/ specialization. Durkheim also discussed Pathological or Abnormal forms of the division of labour which he categorised as Anomic and forced.

8.6 THE STUDY OF SUICIDE

According to Durkheim, suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result. This definition however was subject to two immediate objections. The first was that such fore knowledge is a matter of degree, varying considerably from one person or situation to another. But for Durkheim, suicides do not constitute a wholly distinctive group of 'monstrous phenomena' unrelated to other forms of behaviour. On the contrary, they are related to other acts, both courageous and imprudent, by an unbroken series of intermediate cases. Suicides are simply exaggerated form of common practices. The second objection was regarding suicide as a realm of psychology rather than of Sociology as it is an individual practise. For Durkheim, suicide could be studied by the methods of Psychology, but he also insisted that suicide could be studied independent of its individual manifestations, as a social fact sui generis.

In the beginning, Durkheim states that suicide can be explained neither by the organic-psychic constitution of individual (normal or pathological) nor by the nature of physical environment. Durkheim also puts light on the aspect of imitation and negates it as a cause of suicide. For him suicide rate is a social fact which is external to an individual. It is the product of the social structure of any given society. Durkheim figured that by examining the different types of suicide, he could identify key elements of social organisation.

In doing this, Durkheim tries to locate the place suicide occupies among other social phenomena in present day societies. For example the differences in the suicide rate between religious communities cannot be attributed to dogmatic differences: suicide is a sin in Protestant denominations as well as among Catholics and Jews. However, there are differences in terms of embeddedness in religious communities. The movement away from Catholicism is one away from a tight hierarchy, from faith, and from rituals which continuously reconfirm the embeddedness in the community. In contrast, the practise of Protestantism does not insist strongly on membership in the community thus showing a greater degree of suicide rate. Jews, on the other hand, have a rich ritual life with a tightly knit community and a pronounced hierarchy, which contributes to a low suicide rate among them. While minorities might be better protected from suicide by virtue of closer social relations forced by the potentially hostile majority- the pattern of lower suicide rates among Catholic holds, however, even where they are in the majority. With similar references, Durkheim finds three facts:

- Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of religious society.
- Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of domestic society.
- Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of political society.

Thus from this, Durkheim stated two key dimensions for understanding suicide: social integration and regulation. Integration is the extent of social relations binding a person or a group to others, such that they are exposed to the moral demands of the group. Regulation is defined as the normative or moral demands placed on the individual that come with membership in a group. These two dimensions underlie Durkheim's development of Egoistic, Altruistuc, Anomic and Fatalistic types of suicide.

Egoistic suicide occurs among people who are not deeply integrated in communities. Importantly, in combining the view of division of labour with the argument of suicide, these are modern people, people in a market economy. They are represented as having loose ties with the society. Functional interdependence between people is motivated by economic

exchange; however, it does not necessarily yield embeddedness in social relations. In the extreme, people are so heterogeneous that they are not members of any group. The second type of suicide is Altruistic suicide. According to Durkheim, it is found among 'primitive' people. For example: suicides of women on their husband's death, suicides of followers or servants on the death of their chief. While Egoistic suicide is due to excessive individuation, Altruistic suicide is caused by too rudimentary individuation. It occurs when the self is too full of society. The self loses significance by virtue of the deep embeddedness in the group.

The third type of suicide is Anomic suicide. It results from man's activities lacking regulation and his consequent sufferings. Anomie is closely related to the psychological concept of dissonance: where persons are closely tied to two different groups which do not overlap, tensions between two normative worlds are likely to occur. Teenagers, for example, struggle to reconcile the different normative demands of their peer group and their family of origin and thus may occupy an anomic social position. The structural representation shows the tight integration into two different groups with conflicting normative demands. As people get to have relations to more than one or two groups, normative demands of any one group diminish and the self can develop in a coherent manner. Durkheim briefly mentions the third type of suicide which he calls as Fatalistic suicide. It is the suicide deriving from excessive regulation, that of persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by excessive discipline.

8.7 THEORY OF RELIGION

In order to define religion, Durkheim followed two steps. Firstly in order to define religion, one must free the mind of all preconceived ideas of religion and secondly Durkheim proposed to examine the various religious systems in their concrete reality. In order to arrive at the definition of religion, Durkheim rejected the ideas of 'spiritual beings' and the idea of 'supernatural'. Emphasising that religion is less an indivisible whole than a complex system of parts, he began by dividing these parts into rites (determined modes of action) and beliefs (collective representations). All religious beliefs present

one common characteristic: they presuppose a classification of all the things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups generally designated by two distinct terms – profane and sacred. Sacred things are those isolated and protected by powerful interdictions and profane things are those which, according to such interdictions, must remain at a distance from their sacred counterparts. Next, Durkheim differentiated between religion and magic where religious beliefs are always common to a determined group or Church which makes a profession of adhering to them and practising the rites connected to them. The belief in magic, on the other hand do not result in binding together. From all the points discussed above, Durkheim came up with the following definition of religion.

"A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them".

Armed with the definition of religion, Durkheim set out in search of its most primitive, elementary form. In doing so, he rejected animism and naturism as the most elementary form of religion by critically examining both. Negating both the theories, he found that the most fundamental and primitive cult is totemism. It is the religious practise of Australian aborigines. Totemism is a religion in which three classes of things- the totemic emblem, the animal or plant, and the members of the clan- are recognised as sacred. In addition, totemism constitutes a cosmology, in which all known things are distributed among the various clans and phratries, so that everything is classified according to the social organisation of the tribe. The belief in totemism is a diffused, impersonal force known as mana, wakan or orenda. In regard to the belief system of the cult practising totemism, Durkheim differentiates between positive and negative rites.

8.8 SYSTEMS OF CLASSIFICATION

In his book 'The Rules of Sociological Method', Durkheim gave the concept of social facts as the distinct object or subject matter of Sociology. For Durkheim, society is a reality sui-generis i.e. reality of its own kind.

Since each science is concerned with its own chosen aspect of reality therefore social reality too must be studied with a new science i.e. Sociology. Therefore in order to distinguish Sociology from Psychology, Biology, Philosophy, Durkheim stated that the subject matter of Sociology should be the study of social facts.

For Durkheim, social facts are collective ways of acting, thinking and feeling, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint which is general over the whole of a given society while having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations. Durkheim attributed three characteristics to social facts. According to him, social facts are external, general and coercive. They are external because they exist outside the individual, are prior to him and exist independently of their will. They are general because they are common to all members of society or at the very least to a majority. It is general because it is collective. Social facts are coercive because they exert constraints upon individual. The presence of constraint is easily ascertained when it is manifested externally through some direct reaction of society as in the case of law, morality, beliefs, customs etc.

According to Durkheim, sociologists must study social facts as real, objective phenomena without preconceptions and prejudices. He provided five rules to study social facts in his book Rules of Sociological Method:

- **Rules for the Observation of Social Facts:** The first and the most basic rule according to Durkheim is to consider social facts as things. To treat social facts as things is to treat them as data, which constitutes the starting point for science. For Durkheim society is the product of human activity and therefore is seen as equivalent of ideas we have of it. He gives the examples of Spencer's and Comte's preconceptions about society which is termed as "cooperation" and "progress of humanity" respectively. Durkheim suggests that even if social facts do not have essential features of things, one must begin the investigations as if they did. To do this one must systematically discard all preconceptions. Secondly, the subject matter of research must only include a group of phenomena defined beforehand by certain common

external characteristics, and all phenomena which correspond to this definition must be so included. And finally when the sociologist undertakes to investigate any order of social facts, he must consider them from a view point where they present themselves in isolation from their individual manifestations.

- **Rules for the Distinction of Normal from the Pathological:** According to Durkheim social facts exhibit both normal and pathological forms and it is an important part of sociological method to provide rules for distinguishing between them. Durkheim defines normal as those social facts which are common to the whole species. They are to be found in most, if not all, individuals, within narrow limits of variation. Social facts which are pathological are those encountered only in a minority of cases, and only for brief periods in the lifetime of the individual even where they occur.

  To show the distinction between normal and pathological, Durkheim gives the example of crime. He states that crime is normal as it is impossible for any society to exist entirely free of it. It is linked to the basic conditions of life, but is also useful for the conditions to which it is bound which are indispensable to the moral evolution of morality and law.

- **Rules for the Constitution of Social Types:** According to Durkheim a social fact can be labelled 'normal' or 'pathological' only in relation to a given social type or species. Therefore, he stated that a branch of Sociology must be devoted to the constitution and classification of these species. According to Durkheim one must begin by classifying societies according to the degree of organisation they manifest, taking as a base the perfectly simple society or single segment society. Within these classes different varieties will be distinguished, according to whether a complete coalescence of the initial segments takes place.

- **Rules for the Explanation of Social Facts:** According to Durkheim social facts are real things, which exercise coercion over individual wills. Therefore no human need or desire, however imperious, would be sufficient to such an effect. Due to this, when one undertakes to

explain a social phenomenon, the efficient cause which produces it and the function it fulfils must be investigated separately. The word function refers to end or goal precisely because social phenomena do not exist for the usefulness of the results they produce. For Durkheim, every time a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, the explanation is false. Therefore Durkheim stated that the determining cause of a social fact must be sought among the antecedent social facts and not among the states of the individual consciousness. He also stated that the function of a social fact must always be sought in the relationship that it bears to some social end.

- **Rules for the Demonstration of Sociological Proof:** Experimentation is the crucial method for testing theories in science. However it is not possible in Sociology. Therefore, for Durkheim comparative method is the closest alternative for testing sociological explanation. According to Durkheim comparative method must be based on the principles of concomitant variations i.e. change in one aspect leading to change in another aspect though both may not be casually related.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State the two types of sanctions.

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Q 2: State the two types of solidarity.

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Q 3: Mention the types of Suicide.

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Q 4: Define totemism.

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Q 5: State the different rules of Sociological Method as mentioned by Durkheim.

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8.9 LET US SUM UP

- Emile Durkheim is regarded as one of the founding father of sociology. He was a French sociologist, social psychologist and philosopher.
- For Durkheim, Sociology is a study of social facts. A social fact is 'a thing that is external to and coercive of the actor'. Through this he wanted to make Sociology a science.
- Division of labour plays a major role in Durkheim's sociological theory.
- Durkheim distinguished between two types of sanctions: repressive and restitutive.
- Through this, Durkheim categorised two types of solidarity: Mechanical and Organic solidarity.
- According to Durkheim, suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result.
- Durkheim categorised four types of suicide: egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic on the basis of integration and regulation.
- A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.
- Durkheim set out in search of its most primitive, elementary form. In doing so, he rejected animism and naturism as the most elementary form of religion by critically examining both. Negating both the theories, he found that the most fundamental and primitive cult is totemism.
- Durkheim stated five rules of sociological method: rules for the observation of social facts, rules for the distinction of normal from the

pathological, rules for the constitution of social types, rules for the explanation of social facts and rules for demonstration of sociological proof.



8.10 FURTHER READING

1) Durkheim, E. (1958). *The Rules of Sociological Method. New York*: The Free Press.

2) Durkheim, E. (1952). *Suicide*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

3) Durkheim, E. (1964). *The Division of Labour in Society*. New York: The Free Press



8.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Repressive and Restitutive

Ans to Q No 2: Mechanical and Organic Solidarity

Ans to Q No 3: Egoistic, Altruistic, Anomic and Fatalistic

Ans to Q No 4: Totemism is a religion in which three classes of things- the totemic emblem, the animal or plant, and the members of the clan- are recognised as sacred. In addition, totemism constitutes a cosmology.

Ans to Q No 5: Rules for the observation of social facts, rules for the distinction of normal from the pathological, rules for the constitution of social types, rules for the explanation of social facts and rules for demonstration of sociological proof.



8.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Is Sociology a science?

Q 2: Differentiate between the two types of solidarity.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Explain integration and regulation by putting light on the forms of suicide.

Q 2: Describe the rules of sociological theory.

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UNIT 9: MAX WEBER'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Max Weber: Early Life Weber's Contributions to Sociological Theories

- 9.3.1 Social Action
- 9.3.2 Traditionalism and Rationality
- 9.3.3 Theory of Authority
- 9.3.4 Theory of Power
- 9.3.5 Theory of Religion

9.4 Let Us Sum Up

9.5 Further Reading

9.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.7 Model Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- know about Max Weber and his early life
- understand Max Weber's work
- discuss his important contributions.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

You will recall that like every other subject, Sociology too has its theories upon which we depend for making a study or assessment of our everyday activities. The sociological theories aim for objectivity and help us to understand why and how particular facts of the social world are related. Max Weber was one of the important German social thinkers of his time and his contributions to sociological theories are acclaimed worldwide. He is often cited with Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim as having laid the foundation

of the classical tradition of Sociology. They are also said to be the three founders of Sociology. He wrote extensively on many subjects and his writings have influenced a wide cluster of sociological theories. He continues to be an influential theorist and many sociologists are indebted to Weber. His theoretical ideas are rooted in empirical and historical research. Therefore he is also known as a Historical Sociologist. In the previous unit we have discussed the contribution of Emile Durkheim to Sociological Theories. In this unit you will get an insight into Max Weber's early life and his focus on social action, rationalization and theory of authority, power and religion.

9.3 Max Weber: Early Life

Max Weber was born on April 21, 1864 in Erfurt, Germany. He was the eldest of seven children of a Prussian family. He was an avid reader and at the young age of fourteen he wrote letters embellished with references to Homer, Virgil, Cicero and Livy and thereby demonstrated his intellectual smartness. His father Max Weber Sr. first worked in the city government of Berlin, next as a magistrate in Erfurt and then got involved with a political establishment, thereby remaining an important member of the National Liberal Party.

Max Weber's mother, Helene Fallenstein, belonged to a distinguished liberal family from Heidelberg and descended from French Huguenot emigrants. She was a lady of discipline, a devout Calvinist and had strong religious commitments which differed from her husband who enjoyed earthly pleasures. The differences between the parents had negative impacts on young Weber.

In 1882 Weber enrolled as a law student in Heidelberg, Initially he was shy and withdrawn but soon he was inclined towards his father's way of life and developed socially. He left Heidelberg after three terms and joined military service. In 1884 he enrolled in the University of Berlin, completed his studies in about eight years, earned his PhD and became a lawyer. He also started teaching in the University of Berlin. In 1896 Weber was called to Heidelberg to

join as professor of economics replacing his former teacher Kneis. These years of academics and work were regulated by his commitment to discipline, time and routines.

The promising career of Weber was coming to an end. In July 1897, Weber and his father broke into a violent argument and his father died about a month later. Weber suffered deeply and could not recover for six or seven years. He found himself unable to work for the next few years. He took to traveling, spent time in a sanitarium and got himself treated by specialists but to no avail. In 1903 his intellectual wonders were gradually returning to him and in 1904 he delivered a lecture on 'the social structure of Germany' in St.Louis, the first in six and a half years. Weber began devoting much time to the study of religion and in 1905 he published one of his best-known works, 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism'.

Weber was tormented by his psychological problems and he was unable to function after 1904. But he contributed to other activities, like he helped found the German Sociological Society in 1910. His home became a hub for a wide range of intellectuals like sociologists Georg Simmel, Robert Michels, and his brother Alfred Weber and the philosopher and literary critic George Lukacs. In these years he wrote and published 'The Religion of China', The Religion of India in 1916 and 'Ancient Judaism' in 1917. Weber was working on his most important work, Economy and Society, but it was left incomplete due to his demise on June 14, 1920 and the work was published unfinished.

In the following subsection let us try to understand Weber's contribution to sociological Theories

9.3.1 Social Action

We are familiar with the word action which implies an act of doing something voluntarily or at other times we tend to react to a situation. All actions have some meaning and emotions attached to them. Action, be it of oneself or others, necessarily involves

movements, time, gestures, activity or reactivity. Few examples of action are an individual driving a car, a student writing an exam or a group of people staging a protest for some reforms in the society.

Max Weber framed Sociology as a science of social action. He focused on those actions where individuals attached subjective (based on individual feelings and opinions) meanings to their actions. He distinguished between action and purely reactive behavior. According to him, behavior is reserved because it has no thought process and interference between stimulus and response is very less. Whereas the occurrence between stimulus and response in an action involves intervention of thought process and results in meaningful action.

Weber was interested on the patterns of individual actions and not collectivity. He insisted that collectivities must be solely treated as acts of individual persons for the purpose of subjective interpretation of action.

Four major types of social action are distinguished in Weber's theory which explains to us the meaning of action. The first is 'zweckrational action' which implies men's involvement in goal-oriented rational action. In this action, means and ends are reasonably or rationally chosen to achieve the goal. For example, a student studying to make his career a promising one, an engineer building a bridge to cross a river, now-a-days apps are developed to make communication or transactions hassle free. The second is 'wertrational action' where action is determined by a belief in the value for the pursuit or attainment of ethical, aesthetic, religious or other forms of behavior. For example, an individual indulging in philanthropic work, a person giving up certain habits for the sake of self-satisfaction. The third is 'affective action' which is determined by the emotional state or feelings of the person. For example, an individual following the doctrines or teachings of his religion, being a part of the school alumni meet. The fourth is 'traditional action' which is guided by actor's habitual thoughts and customary ways of

behaving. For example, people pursue higher education because everyone is doing so since a long time, people acquire new items of luxury as others too have acquired.

From the above explanation on Weber's social action, we can conclude that man is guided by different types of action. The actions describe the underlying motives of the social actor and his behavior with the society in regard to his action.

9.3.2 TRADITIONALISM AND RATIONALITY

Traditions, as we know, are part of our lives. They are set of social practices which call for continuing and celebrating rituals or events of real or imagined past. Traditions are contrasted with modernity where the former is said to comprise traits that are non-scientific, primitive and emotional. Weber stressed that the world of modernity has been deserted by the Gods. Man too chased them away by being rationalized, calculable and predictable. Traditionalism emphasizes on moral and religious truths passed on by tradition and is associated with divinity or holiness where human reason is not capable of attaining those truths. We are aware of tradition holding the human society where human behavior is encouraged by customs and traditions and there is little space for reason to make its point. Therefore rationalization supports the use of reason and advances towards being practical.

Weber was of the view that all human actions are directed by meanings and motives which have to be appreciated in order to understand action. He identified various actions on the basis of its meanings. They are as follows:

- **Affective or emotional action**- which derives from a person's emotional state at a specific time,
- **Traditional action**-which is followed by people because of habit and established customs,
- **Rational action**-involves a clear awareness of goal, a systematic assessment and selection of the various ways to achieve the goal.

Weber saw rational action becoming the supreme mode of action in modern industrial society; thereby he referred to it as the process of Rationalization. The increasing tendency of the social actors to the use of knowledge in context of impersonal relationships, with the aim of achieving greater control over the world around them is the core of rationalization. Weber cited examples of rationalized thoughts in sphere of religion where priestly powers based on traditions had been weakened by prophets with their charismatic appeals.

Weber was interested in regularities and patterns of action within civilizations, institutions, organizations, strata, classes and groups. Donald Levine (1981) argues that Weber is interested in 'objectified' rationality, that is, action that is in accord with some process of external systematization. Stephen Kalberg (1980) identifies four types of 'objective ' rationality in Weber's work. They are the following:

- **Practical Rationality-** it involves systematic decision to view and judge worldly activities in practical terms.
- **Theoretical or Intellectual Rationality**- it involves understanding the world or having a mastery of reality through abstract concepts rather than through action.
- **Substantive Rationality**-it involves directing an action through system of values and deciding a choice of means to ends through value implication.
- **Formal Rationality-**it involves calculating efficient means to ends and occurs with reference to universally applied rules, laws and regulations.

Formal rationality may be defined by its six basic characteristics. First is calculability, where formally rational institutions emphasize on things that can be counted or quantified. Second is efficiency, to find the best means and ways to a given end or a desired result. Third is predictability which implies things operating in the same way from one time or place to another. Fourth is

dehumanization, the focus on reducing human technology and ultimately replacing it by non-human technology (example computerized systems). Fifth, the emphasize is on gaining control over uncertainties, those posed by human beings who work in or are served by them. Finally, formally rational systems tend to have irrational consequences for the system itself or for people involved in the system. According to Weber, the world is likely to be less enchanted, less magical and less meaningful to people and this is one of the irrationalities of rationality.

Rationalization with its features like use of knowledge, efficiency, predictability etc, has helped in transforming society and made its remarkable impact in creating bureaucratic organizations and developing capitalism. A bureaucratic organization works systematically, is calculative of its steps or means to attain its goal and puts an end to those factors which pose in its way of achieving their objectives or the goal. He also resorted to the fact that mankind would be imprisoned in an iron cage of its own making because of the inclination of mankind towards rationalization and bureaucratization of modern society.

Form the above discussion on traditionalism and rationalization, we learn that the society or the systems or the people take calculative measures, carve out goals to achieve through systematic ways and develop themselves. The traditions and customs are kept aside in making reasonable decisions and thinking on a practical side.

9.3.3 Theory of Authority

The term authority has been playing a vital role in our lives. From inception till now we are subjected to authoritative rule or we ourselves make use of it when needed to control matters and affairs of everyday life or society.

Weber proposed a three division typology for authority corresponding to his discussion as to why authority is claimed by

men and what makes him feel as having legitimate power or right to exercise it thereby commanding obedience from others. Weber pointed out that structures of authority exist in every social institutions or setting. It is to be noted that Weber's analysis of authority structures was consistent with his assumptions about the nature of action. He defined domination as the "probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons". Though domination can have a variety of bases like legitimate or illegitimate, Weber was interested in the legitimate base which he called authority. Authority can be said to be that form of power which is accepted as legitimate, right, just and therefore obeyed on that basis. The three divisions of authority are the following:

- **Rational-legal authority:** It characterize hierarchical relations in modern society, legality of normative rules and those holding upper positions in hierarchy issue commands of obedience. Example: Bureaucracy is a type of organization consisting of offices organized in hierarchical manner with rules, functions, written documents and means of compulsion.
- **Traditional authority:** It is a feature of the pre-modern society and is based on a belief of sanctity or divinity of ancient traditions. It legitimizes the claim of leaders and belief of the followers on the virtue of age-old rules and powers. For example, earlier, kings used to rule an empire and his authority was not questioned.

There are different forms of traditional authority:

- **Gerontocracy:** it involves rule by elders.
- **Primary patriarchalism:** it involves leaders who inherit their positions.
- **Patrimonialism:** here a ruler's household gets expanded with administration like that of a governmental office. For example, military force is a tool or instrument for the ruler.
- **Feudalism:** the discretion of the ruler is limited by imposition of

more routinized, contractual relationships between leader and subordinate.

- **Charismatic authority:** it rests on the people possessing extra-ordinary qualities, virtuosity, and devotion to sanctity, heroism and their appeal to the public. In the opinion of D.Smith, 1998, although Weber did not deny that a charismatic leader may have outstanding characteristics, his sense of charisma was more dependent on the group of disciples and the way that they define the charismatic leader. A person may be quite ordinary, but the process and ways through which he is upheld, followed, elevated and set apart from the ordinary is regarded crucial and confers on him the status of a charismatic personality. For example, the charisma of Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa etc., al has spread in a worldwide manner and so the followers of their principles, philanthropic service, etc.

The discussion above gives us the picture of the different types of authority and their mode of operation in the society. Authority in a way directs us, binds us in discipline and inspires us to be followers of some of their deeds.

9.3.4 Theory of Power

As we know power is a broad concept and also it is at the heart of the society's system of stratification and division. In a lay man's words we can define power as something that one has over another or one's ability to control others because of his/her power.

Max Weber in his essay 'The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: Class, Status and Party' (in Economy and Society, 1920), defined power as "the chance of…men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action". For Weber, the differential distribution of power leads to a situation where life chances are also differentially distributed, that is, the ability to obtain economic, social, and political resources is not distributed equally.

Power was regarded as the fundamental concept of stratification by Weber and he considered class and status as its two principal dimensions. Power can be said to be an aspect of social relationships. An individual holds power in relation to groups and not in isolation. It is therefore power over others. If we go by Weber's definition we can say that power is the degree to which an individual or group can get its own way in a social relationship and they have the power to the degree to which others comply with their will. Weber is of the opinion that the basis from which power can be exercised may differ according to the social context or situation, which might be either historical or structural circumstances. Weber argues that power, including economic power, may be valued 'for its own sake', and that men do not only strive for power. Let us consider examples of power relation: first, the power exercised by a teacher over his/her students, thereby enforcing discipline and maintaining decorum in the classroom. Here two actors are involved-teacher and students, where power operates in relation to a group or collectivity. Second, the power exercised by our government on its people and making them law-abiding citizens. In the event of rejection or disobedience of law, the government has its power to punish its law breaker.

Weber's definition of power suggests that people holding power exercise it at the expense of others and because there is a fixed amount of power, so if one party or actor holds power, the other(s) do not. This implies that power remains constant as when held by an individual or group, then the others do not hold the power. This view is known as the 'constant-sum' concept of power. His definition also implies that power holders tend to use power to further their own interest. Weber's 'constant-sum' power is rejected by Talcott Parsons, the American Sociologist. According to Parsons, instead of focusing on power as something being held by some at the expense of others, he regards power as something possessed by the society as a whole. The capacity to mobilize resources of the

society and achieving goals by its members makes more power exist in the society. This view is known as the 'variable-sum' concept of power, since power in the society is not fixed or constant and is used by the whole society.

From the above descriptions of power, we come to the conclusion that the act of power exists in the society through group relation and that it is used to ensure obedience in a system.

9.3.5 Theory of Religion

Religion as we know is the system of belief, devotion, doctrines and practices which occupies a central place in our lives. Much of Weber's time was spent in the study of religion. The structures of world religions, systems of ideas of the world religions, spirit of capitalism and rationalization as a modern system of norms and values interested him. From Marxian perspective, religious behavior or religion (as a part of the superstructure) is said to be shaped by economic forces (infrastructure). But this view is rejected by Max Weber and he is of the opinion that this is not always the case. According to him, the reverse i.e. religious beliefs can be a major influence on economic behavior, can occur under certain conditions and his concern was to discover to what extent religious faith is a part of the formation and expansion of the economic essence.

Weber in his most famous work', The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', explores the relationship between rise of Protestantism (a form of Christian faith) and development of Western capitalism or the emerging capitalist class. According to Weber, 'The pursuit of profit and forever renewed profit' forms the essence of capitalism and that capitalism as a system is organized, based on rational bureaucratic lines where business transactions, cost and profits are calculated and estimated with care. Weber argues that the practice of capitalism is the spirit of capitalism in an unrevealed way where the latter (spirit of capitalism) is simply not a process of

money making but a way of life consisting of a set of ideas, ethics, duties and values.

Weber claims that ascetic Protestantism which runs on the principles of determination, self-discipline, single-minded manner and discarded habits of luxuries, time wasting, laziness, idle gossip etc, was instrumental in the creation and development of the spirit and practice of capitalism. He argues that standardization of production and the specialized division of labor which forms the major features of capitalism have been motivated by Protestantism. Thus, Weber maintains that the moral orientations of Protestantism preceded the growth of western capitalism. He, in his theory of religion, puts an emphasis on religious ethics and values which enhance systematic flow of economy and also encourages saving because Protestantism disapproves unnecessary spending.

Weber developed a typology of the paths of salvation in his analysis on the relation between the world's religions and economy. First is **Asceticism,** which means to deny the pleasures of the world and involves norms and values. There are two forms of ascetic religions. '**Otherworldly asceticism'** command followers to work outside the secular world and fight the temptations.

'**Innerworldly asceticism'** actively urge followers to work within the secular world to find salvations or at least signs of it.

Second is **Mysticism,** which involves emotion, inaction and observation or contemplation. Weber divided mysticism into two types. '**World rejecting mysticism'** involves total flight from the world. **'Innerworldly mysticism'** involves efforts to understand the meaning of the world, but as the world is viewed as being beyond individual understanding, therefore these efforts are likely to fail.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Why did Weber frame Sociology as a science of social action?

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Q 2: What are the four types of Rationality according to Weber?

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Q 3: What are the three divisions of Authority?

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Q 4: What are the different forms of Traditional Authority?

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9.4 LET US SUM UP

- Max Weber had been an intellectual persona since his early days and his ideas continue to inspire the hub of learners and researchers. His theories help in disseminating knowledge.
- Weber's social action was based on individual actions and feelings.
- He classified action into four types: zweckrational, wertrational, affective and traditional.
- He emphasized the rationalization process involving knowledge, efficiency etc, al in achieving control over man's actions and the world rather than by traditional customs and values.
- He talked about authority as the legitimate power exercised by social actors and divided among rational-legal, traditional and charismatic authority.
- Power according to Weber exists in relation to other actors or

individuals and not in segregation. Power of a person helps him in commanding respect or obedience from another.

- Webers concept of power is sometimes called the 'constant-sum' concept of power because it remains constant. As one social actor or group holds power, another actor does not hold it.
- In Weber's theory of religion, he is of the opinion that religion can impact economic behavior. With teachings of religion (he made mention of the Protestant faith) in the form of discipline, determination etc, the people in the economic system (capitalism) gets discipline and runs under systematic norms and rules.



9.5 FURTHER READING

1) Coser, Lewis A. (2012). *Masters of Sociological Thought*. Rawat Publications.

2) Ritzer, George, and Douglas Goodman J. (2003) *Sociological Theory*.



9.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Weber framed Sociology as a science of social action because he wanted to focus on those actions where he attached subjective meaning to individual action.

Ans to Q No 2: Practical, theoretical or intellectual, substantive and formal rationality.

Ans to Q No 3: Rational-legal, traditional and charismatic authority.

Ans to Q No 4: Gerontocracy, primary patriarchalism, patrimonialism and feudalism.



9.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Define power. Distinguish between constant-sum and variable-sum power.

Q 2: Write a short note on Ascetic Protestantism.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Explain the theory of Authority of Max Weber. How do you relate in your society?

Q 2: Distinguish between traditionalism and rationalization. Explain formal rationality.

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UNIT 10: INFLUENCE OF KARL MARX ON SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Karl Marx: A Biographical Sketch

10.4 Dialectical Materialism

10.5 Alienation and Capitalism

10.6 Capitalism and Freedom

10.7 Commodity Production

10.8 Let Us Sum Up

10.9 Further Reading

10.10 Answers to Check your Progress

10.11 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand the contribution of Marx and his tradition towards sociology as a discipline
- explain the concepts of dialectical materialism, alienation, freedom and commodity production
- discuss the conflict school of thought propounded by Marx and the related notions of exploitation embedded in it.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

Marx was one of the founding fathers of sociology. He was an economist, sociologist, revolutionary and a radicalist. For Marx, in every society, be it pre-capitalist or capitalist, the economic system consisting of relations of production allow some people to dominate the labour power of some other people. This is the essence of exploitation. It is this exploitative nature of society that Marx tries to explain through his conflict theory. This

unit tries to explore the various concepts revolving around Marx's theory which includes dialectical materialism, alienation, freedom and commodity production.

Marx then turned to writing and journalism to support him. In 1842, he became editor of the liberal Cologne newspaper Rheinische Zeitung, but the Berlin government prohibited it from being published which became effective in the year 1843. In the month of June, he married Jenny von Westphalen and moved to Paris. Paris was the political heart of Europe in 1843. There, along with Arnold Ruge, Marx founded a political journal titled German French Annals. Only a single issue was published before philosophical differences between Marx and Ruge appeared, which resulted in its demise; but in August 1844, the journal brought Marx together with a contributor, Friedrich Engels, who became his collaborator and lifelong friend. Together, the two began writing a criticism of the philosophy of Bruno Bauer, a Young Hegelian and former friend of Marx's. The result of Marx and Engels's collaboration was published in 1845 as The Holy Family. Later Marx moved to Belgium after being expelled from France while writing for another radical newspaper, Vorwarts.

In Brusssels, Marx was introduced to socialism by Moses Hess, and finally broke off from the philosophy of the Young Hegel completely. While there, he wrote The German Ideology, in which he developed his theory on historical materialism. At the beginning of 1846, Marx founded a Communist Correspondence Committee in an attempt to link socialists from around Europe. Inspired by his ideas, socialists in England held a conference and formed the Communist League, and in 1847 at a Central Committee meeting in London, the organisation asked Marx and Engels to write Manifesto of the Communist Party. The Communist Manifesto as this work is commonly known was published in 1848. Later Marx moved to London and helped found the German Worker's Educational Society. He became increasingly focused on capitalism and economic theory and in 1867, he published the first volume of Das Kapital. Marx died of pleurisy in London on March 14, 1883.

10.4 DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Dialectics is a method of thinking and interpreting the world of both nature and society. It is a way of looking at the universe, which sets out from the axiom that everything is in a constant state of change and flux. Dialectics explains that change and motion can only take place through contradictions. So instead of a smooth, uninterrupted line of progress, we have a line which is interrupted by sudden and explosive periods in which slow, accumulated changes (quantitative change) undergo a rapid acceleration, in which quantity is transformed into quality. Dialectics is the logic of contradiction. The laws of dialectics were already worked out in detail by Hegel, however, they appear in a mystified, idealist form. It was Marx and Engels who first gave dialectics a scientific, that is to say, materialist basis. "Hegel wrote before Darwin and before Marx," wrote Trotsky. "Thanks to the powerful impulse given to the thought by the French Revolution, Hegel anticipated the general movement of science. But because it was only anticipation, although by a genius, it received from Hegel an idealistic character. Hegel operated with ideological shadows as the ultimate reality. Marx demonstrated that the movement of these ideological shadows reflected nothing but the movement of material bodies." Thus contradictory to Hegel's idealism, Marx proposed a materialistic nature to the study of dialectics.

"My dialectic method," wrote Marx, "is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e. the process of thinking, which, under the name of 'the Idea,' transforms into an independent subject, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea.' With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human minds, and translated into forms of thought."

Marx and Engels, in describing their materialism, were also influenced by Feuerbach. Both Marx and Engles regarded Feuerbach as the philosopher who restored materialism to its rights. However, the materialism of Marx and Engels is not identical to Feuerbach's materialism.

As a matter of fact, Marx and Engels took from Feuerbach's materialism its 'inner kernel' and developed it into a scientific philosophical theory of materialism and cast aside the idealistic and religious-ethical aspects.

Dialectics comes from the Greek 'dialego', to discourse, to debate. In ancient times, dialectics was the art of arriving at the truth by disclosing the contradictions in the argument of an opponent and overcoming these contradictions. There were philosophers in ancient times who believed that the disclosure of contradictions in thought and the clash of opposite opinions was the best method of arriving at the truth. The dialectical method of thought, later extended to the phenomena of nature, developed into the dialectical method of apprehending nature, which regards the phenomena of nature as being in constant change, and the development of nature as the result of the development of the contradictions in nature, as the result of the interaction of opposed forces in nature. Engels defines dialectics as "the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought." In Anti-Dühring and The Dialectics of Nature, Engels gives an account of the laws of dialectics, beginning with the three most fundamental ones:

- The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa
- The law of the interpenetration of opposites, and
- The law of the negation of the negation.

The principal features of the Marxist dialectical method are as follows:

- **Nature Connected and Determined**: Dialectics does not regard nature as an accidental agglomeration of things, of phenomena, unconnected with, isolated from, and independent of, each other, but as a connected and integral whole, in which things and phenomena are organically connected with, dependent on, and determined by, each other. The dialectical method therefore holds that no phenomenon in nature can be understood if taken by itself, isolated from its surrounding phenomena, in as much as any phenomenon in any realm of nature may become meaningless to us if it is not considered in connection with the surrounding conditions, but divorced from them and that, vice versa, any phenomenon can be understood and explained if considered

in its inseparable connection with surrounding phenomena, as one conditioned by surrounding phenomena. Thus each aspect of nature is interdependent on one another and are not isolated departments.

- **Nature is a State of Continuous Motion and Change**: Dialectics holds that nature is not a state of rest and immobility, stagnation and immutability, but a state of continuous movement and change, of continuous renewal and development, where something is always arising and developing, and something always disintegrating and dying away. The dialectical method therefore requires that phenomena should be considered not only from the standpoint of their interconnection and interdependence, but also from the standpoint of their movement, their change, their development, their coming into being and going out of being.
- **Natural Quantitative Change Leads to Qualitative Change**: Dialectics does not regard the process of development as a simple process of growth, where quantitative changes do not lead to qualitative changes, but as a development which passes from insignificant and imperceptible quantitative changes to open fundamental changes to qualitative changes. The change does not occur accidentally but as the natural result of an accumulation of imperceptible and gradual quantitative changes. The dialectical method therefore holds that the process of development should be understood not as movement in a circle, not as a simple repetition of what has already occurred, but as an onward and upward movement, as a transition from an old qualitative state to a new qualitative state, as a development from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher.
- **Contradictions Inherent in Nature**: Dialectics holds that internal contradictions are inherent in all things and phenomena of nature, for they all have their negative and positive sides, a past and a future, something dying away and something developing. The struggle between these opposites, the struggle between the old and the new, between that which is dying away and that which is being born between that which is disappearing and that which is developing, constitutes the

internal content of the process of development, the internal content of the transformation of quantitative changes into qualitative changes. The dialectical method therefore holds that the process of development from the lower to the higher takes place not as a harmonious unfolding of phenomena, but as a disclosure of the contradictions inherent in things and phenomena, as a struggle of opposite tendencies which operate on the basis of these contradictions.

Related to the idea of dialectical materialism, historical materialism plays an important concept in Marxist tradition. Historical materialism is the extension of the principles of dialectical materialism to the study of social life, an application of the principles of dialectical materialism to the phenomena of the life of society, to the study of society and of its history. Marx explained historical materialism by bringing in the concept of modes of production. Modes of production consist of means of production and relations of production. Means of production consists of land, natural resources, technology, labour that are necessary for the production of material goods. Relations of production on the other hand consist of social relationships people enter into as they acquire and use the means of production. Marx observed that within any given society, the mode of production changes as the means of production and relations of production changes. Marx differentiated between five modes of production:

- **Primitive Communism**: The basis of relation under primitive communism is that the means of production are socially owned. Labor in common led to the common ownership of the means of production as well as the fruits of production. Here the conception of private ownership of the means of production did not yet exist. Here there was no classes and hence no exploitation.
- **Slavery:** The basis of the relations of production under the slave system is that the slave owner owns the means of production, he also owns the worker in production – the slave, whom he can sell and purchase. Here there is no longer common and free labor of all members of society in the production process. There prevails forced labor of slaves, who are

exploited by the non-laboring slave owners. The slave owners are the prime and principal property owner in this mode of production.

- **Feudalism:** The basis of the relations of production under the feudal system is that the feudal lord owns the means of production and does not fully own the worker in production- the serf. The new productive forces demand that the labourer shall display some kind of initiative in production and an inclination for work. The feudal lord therefore discards the slave, as a laborer who has no interest in work and is entirely without initiative, and prefers to deal with the serf who has his own husbandry, implements of production, and a certain interest in work essential for the cultivation of the land and for the payment in kind of a part of his harvest to the feudal lord. Here private property is further developed. Exploitation is nearly as severe as it was under slavery- it is only slightly mitigated. A class struggle between the exploiters and the exploited is the principal feature of the feudal system.
- **Capitalism:** The basis of the relations of production under the capitalist system is that the capitalist owns the means of production, but not the workers in production – the wage laborers, who are deprived of means of production and are obliged to sell their labor power to the capitalist and to bear the yoke of exploitation. Capitalism is featured by revolution, which aims to replace the existing capitalist ownership of the means of production by socialist ownership. This means that the main feature of the capitalist system is the acute class struggle between the exploiters and the exploited.
- **Socialism:** The basis of the relations of production under the socialist system, which so far has been established only in U.S.S.R., is social ownership of the means of production. Here there are no longer exploiters and exploited. The goods produced are distributed according to labor performed, on the principle: 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat.' Here the mutual relations of people in the process of production are marked by cooperation and the mutual assistance of workers who are free from exploitation. Here the relations of production fully correspond to the state of productive forces; for the social character

of the process of production is reinforced by the social ownership of the means of production

10.5 ALIENATION AND CAPITALISM

Alienation is the transformation of people's own labour into a power which rules them as if by a kind of natural or supra-human law. The origin of alienation is commodity fetishism- the belief that inanimate things (commodities) have human powers (i.e. value) and are able to govern the activity of human beings. Alienation is an idea developed by the young Marx in the 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' (1884), and later developed in his critique of political economy in Capital. Marx developed the idea out of his study of Hegel. Hegel believed that history was the manifestation of the movement of Spirit acting "behind the backs" of actors in history; Marx however held that Hegel's 'Spirit' was nothing more nor less than human activity itself. It is human activity that lies behind the seemingly impersonal forces dominating society.

In feudal society humans had not yet developed the means to control the natural world, or to produce enough to be free from famine or to cure diseases. All social relationships were conditioned by a low stage of development of the productive powers of labour and correspondingly limited relations between men within the process of creating and reproducing their material life; hence also limited relations between man and nature. It was land that described one's dominating power and the rule of private property begins with property in land. From here Marx substituted that alienation arose from the low level of the productive forces, from human subordination to the land and from the domination of the feudal ruling class. However the constraints of feudalism were very different from the dynamics of capitalism. The bourgeosie wanted a society in which everything could be bought and sold for money. Capitalism involved a fundamental change in the relations between men, instruments of production and the materials of production. Men no longer enjoyed the right to dispose what they produced. They became separated from the product of their labour. Division of labour became an integral part of the capitalist system where the workers became

increasingly dependent on the capitalists who owned the means of production. Labour becomes external to the worker and does not belong to his essential being; that he does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind. This according to Marx is alienation.

The development of capitalism proved irresistible and it brought alienation on a scale previously unimaginable. In his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Marx identified four specific ways in which alienation pervades capitalist society:

The product of labour: The worker is alienated from the object he produces because it is owned and disposed off by the capitalist. Marx argued that the alienation of the worker from what he produces is intensified because the products of labour actually begin to dominate the labourer.

The labour process: The second element of alienation is a lack of control over the process of production. The worker has no say over the conditions in which they work and how the work is organised. This lack of control over the work process transforms the capacity to work creatively into its opposite, so the worker experiences activity as passivity, power as impotence and procreation as emasculation. The workers own physical and mental energy, his personal life becomes an activity directed against himself, which is independent of him and does not belong to him.

Fellow human beings: One is alienated from their fellow human beings. This alienation arises in part because of the antagonisms which inevitably arise from the class structure of society. One is alienated from those who exploit him and control the things one produces. Each attempts to establish over the other alien power, in the hope of thereby achieving satisfaction of his own selfish needs.

The human nature: The fourth element is one's alienation from what Marx called our species being. What makes us human is our ability to consciously shape the world around us. However, under capitalism one's labour is coerced, forced labour. Work bears no relationship to one's personal inclination or collective interests. Human beings are social beings. They

have the ability to act collectively but under capitalism, that ability is submerged under private ownership and the class division it produces. This produces alienation from the human nature.

10.6 CAPITALISM AND FREEDOM

Marx criticised the Young Hegelians severely because he had once been one of them and was now making an irrevocable break with them. He saw the Hegelians as hopeless idealists, in the philosophical sense. That is, they saw the world as reflective of ideas, with the dynamics of social life revolving around consciousness and other cognitive processes by which 'ideal essences" work their magic on humans. Marx saw this emphasis on the "reality of ideas" as nothing more than a conservative ideology that supports people's oppression by the material forces of their existence. Marx saw humans as being unique by virtue of their conscious awareness of themselves and their situation. They are capable of self reflection and hence assessment of their position in society. People produce their own ideas and conceptions of the world in light of the social structures in which they are born, raised and live.

The essence of people's lives is the process of production, involves before anything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other material things. To meet these contingencies of life, production is necessary. But as production satisfies one set of needs, new needs arise and encourage alterations in the ways that productive activity is organised. The elaboration of productive activity creates a division of labour, which is alienating because it increasingly deprives humans of their capacity to determine their productive activities as discussed above. According to Marx, the capacity to use language, to think, and to analyse allows humans to alter their environment. People do not merely have to react to their material conditions in some mechanical way; they can also use their capacities for thought and reflection to construct new material conditions and corresponding social relations. Indeed the course of history involved such processes as people actively restructured the material conditions of their existence. The goal of social theory, Marx implicitly argues, is to use humans'

unique facility to expose those oppressive social relations and to propose alternatives. This is the basis of the emancipatory aspect of Marx's theory which also forms the basis for capitalism and freedom in Marx's writings.

More specifically, Marx tends, to see freedom in terms of removal of obstacles to human emancipation, that is to the manifold development of human powers and bringing into being a form of association worthy of human nature. Notable among such obstacles are the conditions of wage labour. As Marx wrote, 'the conditions of their life and labour and therewith all the conditions of existence of modern society have become something over which individual proletariats have no control and over which no social organisation can give them control'. It is only when one realises their collective subordination which Marx calls 'class for itself', the realisation of one's freedom by forming a social class as opposed to the bourgeoisie class begins.

10.7 COMMODITY PRODUCTION

Commodities are objects that satisfy human needs and wants. Commodities are the fundamental units of capitalism, a form of economy based on the intense accumulation of such objects. The basic criterion for assessing a commodity's value is its essential usefulness, what it does in the way of satisfying needs and wants. This usefulness is its use-value, a property intrinsic to the commodity. Commodities also possess an exchange-value, the relative value of a commodity in relation to other commodities in an exchange situation.

Exchange-value as monetary value is what one means when one says a commodity has 'value' in a market. Marx poses the question of where this value comes from. How is it that commodities with different use-values can be measurable in the same units? His answer is that universal measure for value, expressed in terms of money, corresponds to the amount of labour time that goes into the making of each commodity. Labour time is the only thing that all commodities with different use-values have in common and is thus the only criterion by which they are comparable in a situation of exchange. This is Marx's labour theory of value. This theory implies that

commodities have a social dimension because their exchange-value is not intrinsic to them as objects but instead depends on the society's entire division of labour and system of economic interdependence, in which different people produce different products for sale on a common market. Exchange-value allows this market to function. As an expression the amount of 'congealed labour' in a given commodity, the value of that commodity, measured in monetary terms, always refers to the system of social and economic interdependence in which it is produced.

Commodities are meaningful in two ways. Firstly as objects of exchange with a certain monetary value. Secondly, commodities reflect not only the labour that went into making them but the social relations of production in which the labour was performed. This social aspect of commodities cannot express itself because in capitalist society the quality of commodity is thought to emanate solely from its price, not from that which money expresses, namely social labour.

Related to the concept of commodity are the theory of labour, theory of wage and the theory of surplus value. As discussed above, commodity which is exchanged is materialised human labour. It is labour power which is sold to the capitalist by the workers to attain a certain amount of subsistence. Therefore labour power can be equated to a commodity. The value of the labour power is defined as the value of the article produced by a worker to gain subsistence for him and his family. In return of the labour power which is sold by the labour to the capitalist, the capitalist provides him wages. The wages are not a share of the commodity which the worker produces but it is the already saved money of the capitalist. Therefore the value of a commodity is roughly proportionate to the average amount of the labour power crystallised in making the commodity. But it is the capitalist who has the total share of the commodity. Marx's main argument was how can the capitalist gain profit if they provide wages to the workers. To explain this, Marx comes with the concept of surplus value.

Surplus value can be defined as the value produced over and above the actual value of a commodity. It is the labourer who produces this value and the surplus is enjoyed by the capitalist. For example- A worker's working time is 6 hours a day and he produces 20 items. He is given the wage of

those particular hours. But in a capitalist system which is exploitative in nature, the worker is made to work for 112 hours and the extra items which he produces is the surplus production through which the capitalist gain profit. The 6 hours of the worker is called the necessary labour time while the extra 6 hours is the surplus labour time. It is through the surplus labour time that the capitalist gains profit.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is dialectical materialism?

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Q 2: What is alienation according to Marx?

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Q 3: Define the concept of freedom as proposed by Marx.

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Q 4: What is commodity according to Marx?

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Q 5: Define the concept of Surplus value.

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10.8 LET US SUM UP

- The German philosopher, revolutionary, economist, sociologist and leader, Karl Marx founded modern scientific socialism, a system of society in which no property is held as private.
- Dialectics is a method of thinking and interpreting the world of both nature and society. It is a way of looking at the universe, which sets out from the axiom that everything is in a constant state of change and flux.

- Dialectics is the logic of contradiction.
- Historical materialism is the extension of the principles of dialectical materialism to the study of social life, an application of the principles of dialectical materialism to the phenomena of the life of society, to the study of society and of its history.
- Marx differentiated between five modes of production: Primitive Communism, Slavery, Feudal System, Capitalism and Socialism.
- Alienation is the transformation of people's own labour into a power which rules them as if by a kind of natural or supra-human law.
- Alienation has four elements: alienation from the product, alienation from the labour process, alienation from fellow beings, and alienation from human nature.
- Marx tends to see freedom in terms of removal of obstacles to human emancipation that is to the manifold development of human powers and bringing into being a form of association worthy of human nature.
- Commodities are the fundamental units of capitalism, a form of economy based on the intense accumulation of such objects. The basic criterion for assessing a commodity's value is its essential usefulness, what it does in the way of satisfying needs and wants.
- Commodities also possess an exchange-value, the relative value of a commodity in relation to other commodities in an exchange situation.
- Surplus value can be defined as the value produced over and above the actual value of a commodity.



10.9 FURTHER READING

1) Marx, K. and F. Engels. (1969). *Selected Works Vol I*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Pp. 108-137, 142-174, 502-506.
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3) Marx, K. (1984). *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Fifth Print. Moscow: Progress Publications.



10.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Political and historical events result from the conflict of social forces and are interpretable as a series of contradictions and their solutions. This conflict is caused by material needs. This process is known as dialectical materialism.

Ans to Q No 2: Alienation is the transformation of people's own labour into a power which rules them as if by a kind of natural or supra-human law.

Ans to Q No 3: Marx tends to see freedom in terms of removal of obstacles to human emancipation that is to the manifold development of human powers and bringing into being a form of association worthy of human nature.

Ans to Q No 4: Commodities are objects that satisfy human needs and wants. Commodities are the fundamental units of capitalism, a form of economy based on the intense accumulation of such objects. The basic criterion for assessing a commodity's value is its essential usefulness, what it does in the way of satisfying needs and wants. This usefulness is its use-value, a property intrinsic to the commodity. Commodities also possess an exchange-value, the relative value of a commodity in relation to other commodities in an exchange situation.

Ans to Q No 5: Surplus value can be defined as the value produced over and above the actual value of a commodity. It is the labourer who produces this value and the surplus is enjoyed by the capitalist.



10.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: State and explain the modes of production.

Q 2: How is freedom related to capitalism in Marx's terms?

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: What is dialectical materialism? How is historical materialism related to it?

Q 2: What is commodity production? Explain the processes related to it which leads to exploitation?

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UNIT 11: FRANKFURT SCHOOL: THEODOR ADORNO, MAX HORKHEIMER, JURGEN HABERMAS

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Critical Theory: Definition and Characteristics

11.4 Thinkers of Frankfurt School: A Brief Overview

- 11.4.1 Theodor Adorno
- 11.4.2 Max Horkheimer
- 11.4.3 Jurgen Habermas

11.5 Conclusion

11.6 Let Us Sum Up

11.7 Further Reading

11.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.9 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- know about Frankfurt school of thought
- understand critical theory and its characteristic features
- explain the main thinkers and theircontribution to the Frankfurt School of thought.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

The development of sociology as a discipline has experienced a series of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of ideas and perspectives that have continued to boost sociological thought among the sociologists. This has indeed been a long process that has taken place throughout the past few centuries. As we all have known, the study of social sciences, particularly Sociology, emerged out of the need to find a way to

study society and the social behavior of the humans who reside in society. Just as the scientists of physical/natural sciences found out objective ways of studying the phenomena of the natural world, there was a need to find out an objective and rational way to study the phenomena of the social world. The early sociologists realized that since humans as social beings behave and not just react to an external stimuli, the methods to study their behavior and action have to be unique and employed out there in the world itself, and not inside a laboratory. So, from what we understand, the approach that is fundamental to understanding the essence of social sciences in general and Sociology in particular is a critical approach to the social structures that are considered as given. Critical thinking believes that it is important to seek for logical ways that would emancipate one from the usual domination of the 'given'. In fact, critical thinking is the characteristic of any science. So, having claimed to aspire for an objective understanding of reality, social sciences too should be no different. Critical thinking therefore has to be seen as a fundamental element in understanding society.

In this unit we will try to understand how critical thinking has been perceived and applied by a number of social thinkers in their attempts to provide different perspectives on social reality and to theorize it.

11.3 CRITICAL THEORY: DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

As said earlier, critical thinking has been present throughout in social sciences and has been carried forward by thinkers across generations. The Frankfurt School of thought consisted of a range of philosophers and social theorists across generations who held critical perspectives on the existing theories of human development. These perspectives, though varied and belonging to different areas of study, could be put together under a common category which came to be known as 'critical theory'. The basic essence of critical theory is that it distinguishes itself from traditional theory on certain practical grounds. According to Horkheimer (1972), one of the earliest and most important critical theorists, critical theory seeks to emancipate and liberate humans from boundings and boundaries of

traditional understandings, and to create a world in which the need of humans are truly satisfied. Critical theory is thus different from traditional theory in the way that the former has a specific practical purpose and it looks for practical approaches towards finding solutions to social problems. Critical theories thus can be seen as emerging as a response to the varied social domination of individuals that could be seen in modern societies. 'Critical theories' emerged alongside the social movements and provided base for social enquiry aimed at attaining freedom from all forms of social domination.

Critical theorists have always attempted to distinguish aims, methods, theories and forms of explanations from the traditional understandings of the positive and social sciences. Rather, they suggest that social enquiry should combine philosophy and social sciences, thus looking not only into explanation of a social reality but also its understanding, not only into a social structure but also into the agency of the individuals that act as active agents of change and continuity in that structure, and not only into regularity but also into normativity. According to the critical theorists, this kind of an approach enriches the essence of a theory to the extent that it goes beyond mere practicality and gives it a moral or normative dimension. It doesn't merely attempt to achieve an independent goal, but truly thrives for 'human emancipation' from social domination and oppression, as Horkheimer's famous definition had suggested. Horkheimer (1993) also argued that the above can only materialize through the interplay between philosophy and social science and has to be achieved by means of empirical social research.

While discussing Critical Theory it is important to mention that in the narrowest sense, critical theory is often referred to as the Frankfurt school starting from Horkheimer and Adorno and extending to Marcuse and Habermas. However, any philosophical approach which has similar practical aims would fall under the category of critical theory. By that logic, Feminism, critical race theory, postcolonial criticisms, etc can all be understood as critical theories.

Thus, there are a few characteristics that are fundamental to a Critical Theory. First, it must be explanatory, i.e., it must explain what is actually wrong with the present social reality; second, it must be practical, i.e., it

must identify the agents/individuals who can change that reality and third, it must be normative, i.e., it must give out clear norms to criticize the present social reality and at the same time suggest doable and practical ways to achieve social change. Critical theory also builds itself on a fundamental understanding that human beings are the producers of their own historical form of life. This again takes one back to the basic argument of social beings as the products of their own social consciousness. A critical approach to what is socially given also ensures a constant testing of established structure of social realities, norms and value systems that exercises control, coercion and regulations on certain sections of the society and marginalize them, eventually leading to social change. To add, human history is the history of changes. Critical theory as a tool of analysis can enable one to look into the processes and patterns of these changes, thereby enabling one to have a better understanding of why social realities are the way they are and how they probably should be, in order to get a better, just and livable society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is meant by critical theory?

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11.4 THINKERS OF FRANKFURT SCHOOL: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

11.4.1 Theodor Adorno

Theodor W. Adorno has to be seen as one of the most important philosophers and social critics of post WWII era. Having his intellectual roots in the Frankfurt school of thought, Adorno belonged to the first generation of critical theorists. A thorough examiner of Western philosophical traditions and a radical critique of contemporary Western society. In his much acclaimed work 'Dialectic of Enlightenment' (1947) written together with Max

Horkheimer, Adorno provided a serious critique of modernity that was claimed to have fundamentally transformed the Western society. He argued that the phenomenon of enlightenment was supposed to emancipate the Western society from inequalities of most sorts. Introduction of science, logic and reason promised to provide a rational society in which miseries of the people burdened by the power of monarchy, feudal elites and church would end and they would achieve social equality. But, Adorno argued, 'modernity' served only a certain category of people who then went on to monopolize it. It liberated only the ones who could afford it socially and economically. Use of science and practice of reason thus becomes a suspicious affair according to Adorno since the privileged section with power continued to carry out irrational activities by using science as a weapon. The simplest example to illustrate this could be the devastation created by the two world wars; the atom bomb, a creation of science, defied the fundamental reason and logic of protecting human life while destroying Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Adorno took a critical stance towards the very understanding of enlightenment, and argued that perhaps enlightenment as a phenomenon was not as rational as it appeared to be. A critical approach to the traditional perception about reason led Adorno and Horkheimer to argue that reason has become irrational. In a search for the roots of this irrationality, both of them turned to the pre-modern society which for them was the basis of the religious and philosophical biases that made it regressive. Thus, they argued that a critique of modernity then must also be a critique of the pre-modern. It is only by looking back and reflecting on the historical mistakes of the past that the present post-modern society can hope for true emancipation.

In their work 'Dialectic of Enlightenment', Adorno and Horkheimer introduced the term 'culture industry' to refer to a culture of consumerism where pleasure and fun were sold as market products. This concept makes one remember the concept of commodity fetishism given by Karl Marx where an unsatiated desire

for commodities persist in the mass culture. Culture industry suggests the commodification of culture where the mass or the people are unable to think and accept commodified emotions and entertainment as natural and become passive consumers of the same. Industrialization of culture means that the meanings of various cultural products are standardized and presented to the Masses for consumption. Everything is reduced to a product. It also meant that individual sentiments could be processed and branded and then stereotyped to be made a product that was consumable. Culture industry sold sentiments like happiness, patriotism, love, etc. in a standard form so as to cater to the consumerist needs of the people; it also helped to create standardized and stereotypical desires among the mass, away from reality and truth, resulting in a consumer culture that became oblivious to real human emotions and relations. Adorno and Horkheimer thus termed Enlightenment to be a mass deception.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: What is the 'culture industry'?

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11.4.2 Max Horkheimer

The writings of Max Horkheimer were largely responsible for developing the epistemological and methodological orientation of the Frankfurt School critical theory. He was instrumental in developing the framework of critical theory through his various writings in the 1930s which was again inspired by the philosophy and thoughts of Marxism.

In his widely popular work 'Traditional and Critical Theory' (1937), Horkheimer attempted to draw out the differences between traditional theories and critical theories. According to Horkheimer, a traditional theory mostly relies on functionality, i.e., the primary feature of such a theory is harmony, where all the parts should come

together to form a harmonious and coherent whole; by this, a traditional theory is mostly free of contradictions. This type of theory is mostly encountered in natural sciences; however, social sciences, especially those that adopted positivist approach as a method which was seen as a social science counterpart to natural sciences, also seemed to retain the characteristics of traditional theory. Traditional theory in that sense is designed in a way that it essentially aims to accomplish the specific task that is given to it. It works in terms of efficiency and for that uses a fixed set of concepts and formula. Horkheimer thus critiqued the formalism that was prevalent in natural and social sciences alike, in the post Enlightenment era. Recognizing the positions of privilege and power that might have influenced and colored the scientific temper, Horkheimer argues that traditional theory is the theory of those at the privileged positions in society, i.e., the status quo.

Unlike traditional theory, critical theory is more interested in the marginalized and tries to bring into focus those ideas which might have been pushed to the periphery. Horkheimer argues that critical theory is "dominated at every turn by a concern for reasonable conditions of life". It shifts its focus from judgements on what is "better, useful, appropriate, productive and valuable", in other words, goes beyond utility and tries to look into what is actually naturally there. For the critical theorists, the world can be seen in a two-fold manner- first is the world of reason and will in which man is the creator and constructor of his own world; and second is the world of capital, which opposes the world of reason and will and which is dominated by pure mechanism and supposedly natural processes, mostly imposed by the privileged sections and internalized by the marginalized. This idea takes one back to Kant's description of reason where he had said that for reason to fully flourish, men have to come out of their imposed immaturity, that is, they have to stop acting as mere organisms that lack reason. Horkheimer criticizes the world of capital as it appears to dictate all aspects of human life.

For him, critical theorists oppose the world of capital because they believe that men have to be governed by true reason. Thus, for Horkheimer, the subject of critical theory is “a definite individual in her real relation to other individuals and groups, in her conflict with a particular class, and finally in the resultant web of relationships with the social totality and with nature.” Further, Horkheimer argues, since the critical theorist is herself a member of the society she must also be aware of her own existence as a part of that very social totality.

11.4.3 Jurgen Habermas

Habermas deals with most of the themes developed by the earlier critical theorists. Habermas believed in the Enlightenment ideals of freedom, justice, happiness and in the power of reason to transform society by curing it of all evils. Philosophy as a discipline was claiming authority over the area of knowledge and was placing itself beyond the reach of praxis. But Habermas was aware that philosophy alone cannot combat the social problems and that the social sciences and the natural sciences will have to come together if a just and free society had to be achieved. So he worked towards bridging the huge void between theory and practice. In fact, the role and contribution of Jurgen Habermas in bridging this gap is considered as the most important of all critical theorists.

Towards the time of Habermas, positivist tradition had already come to be heavily criticized. However, it still dominated the intellectual thinkings and cultural life of that time to a huge extent. Habermas’s philosophical formulation to reconstruct the prehistory of modern positivism can be understood as being deeply influenced by Kantian idea of ‘reason.’ Habermas derives from Kant’s idea that reason is self-reflective and that self-critique and self-reflection emancipates. Kant had argued that enlightenment means the coming out of man from his own ‘self-imposed’ immaturity, which is fundamental for emancipation. For Kant, the ideas of reason are

more regulative rather than constitutive. This means that they do not constitute it but merely regulate it. Critical theorists before Habermas had criticized this idea.

One of his major works that gained Habermas his first public attention was his work 'Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere' published in 1962. It gave a detailed social history of the development of the Bourgeoise public sphere from its origins in the 18th Century salons up to its transformation through the influence of capitalism-driven mass media. Through the description of interactions in the salons Habermas stressed on the idea of inclusive critical discussions free of social and economic pressure in which individuals treat each other as equals in a cooperative attempt to reach a common ground of understanding a concern. However, as these small discussion societies grew into mass publics in the 19th century, ideas became commodities and assimilated to the economics of mass media consumption. Habermas did not believe in giving up the idea of public reason. Instead, he opined for a concept of public-opinion formation that is feasible at both social and institutional level and also historically meaningful, normatively meeting the needs of the social-welfare state and is at the same time theoretically and empirically clear and identifiable. What he basically argued was for a structural transformation of the public sphere through which such a concept of public-opinion formation could be implemented.

Habermas's interest in the political led him to a series of philosophical studies and critical-social analysis. His work 'Towards a Rational Society' (1970) is an attempt to apply his emerging theory of rationality to the critical analysis of contemporary society. In his critique of technocracy, i.e., governance by scientific experts and bureaucracy, he distinguishes 'work' from 'interaction' which takes place as per interest of the human species. The former relies on actions based on rational choice of efficient means, whereas the latter relies on forms of communicative action. 'Work' refers to forms

of instrumental and strategic actions, whereas in 'interaction' the actors coordinate their behaviours on the basis of consensual norms. Habermas extensively criticizes science and technology as ideology. According to him, by reducing practical problems of life to technical problems for experts, contemporary elites eliminate the need for public and their opinion, dismissing the democratic discussions of value. This strategically distances the population from a political consciousness. Human interest in the technical control of nature thus functions as an ideology and acts as a screen to mask the value-laden face of the ruling structure which mostly serve the capitalist status quo.

Habermas's attempt to provide a framework for an interdisciplinary critical theory can be seen in his another important work 'Knowledge and Human Interests' (1968). He wanted to establish critical theory as a respectable and distinct form of knowledge and he wanted to do so through a methodological critique of the then dominant positivist philosophy of science. To do so, he develops a theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' that are tied both to the natural history of human species and the imperatives of the socio-cultural forms of life, but are not merely reducible to them.

Habermas developed his theory on the assumption that human beings are driven by interests in acquiring knowledge. He made language a base and focussed on interpersonal relations as the basis of discursive formations of normative claims that validate social lives. He welcomed scientific approach but did not accept the universality of scientific method. Habermas's significance lies in rescuing critical theory from the shackles of self-critical negation, unlike his predecessors like Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. The latter, because of their disillusionment with the society and the Enlightenment, appeared to reduce or limit themselves to the task of critiquing the totalitarian tendencies of Enlightenment. Habermas gave critical theory a new turn with his 'language paradigm' which was free from the subjective bias of 'consciousness'. He re-looked

at a rational critique of the critical theory as critical self-reflection and rational reconstruction. He introduced universal pragmatics with an intent to effectively address the theory-practice problem, which became the foundation for communicative action. Thus, Habermas successfully brought specialized information into debates among the common folk with the use of everyday language.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Who wrote the book 'Structural Transformation of the public sphere'?

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11.5 CONCLUSION

A critical engagement with the Enlightenment reason is at the centre of the critical theory of postmodern philosophy. Adorno and Habermas, each in their own ways, attempt to go beyond the limitations of modernity and look at it from a postmodernist approach. Habermas attempts to defend the philosophy of Enlightenment but engages with it critically, trying to form a bridge between the disillusionment of postmodern theorists regarding modernity and the practical solution to the problems that seemed to arise from modernity. All the three in their own way represent the multifaceted essence of critical theory as a concept. Though the ways of approaching are different, their common goal, and hence the fundamental goal of critical theory, is freedom and emancipation of humans from the marginalizing forces of society. Critical Theory thus offers an approach to distinctly normative issues that cooperates with the social sciences in a non-reductive way. Its domain is inquiry into the normative dimension of social activity, in particular how actors employ their practical knowledge and normative attitudes from complex perspectives in various sorts of contexts. It also must consider social facts as problematic situations from the point of view of variously situated agents.

Thus, Frankfurt School tried to make a Hegelian reinterpretation of

Marxism in terms of advanced capitalist society. It critically looked at the developments of the advanced capitalist society. Critical theory attempted to examine and provide a critique of society and culture, and it tried to do so by borrowing knowledge from the broad world of social sciences. While traditional theorists see the social scientist as independent of the object of study, critical theorists acknowledge that the social scientist is a part of the very society she studies, and so her viewpoints cannot be detached from the society she lives in.



11.6 LET US SUM IT UP

- Frankfurt School of thought consisted of a range of philosophers and social theorists across generations who held critical perspectives on the existing theories of human development.
- Critical theory seeks to emancipate and liberate humans from boundings and boundaries of traditional understandings, and to create a world in which the need of humans are truly satisfied.
- Critical theory must be explanatory, practical and normative.
- Critical theory is different from traditional theory in the way that the former has a specific practical purpose and it looks for practical approaches towards finding solutions to social problems.
- "Critical theories" emerged alongside the social movements and provided base for social enquiry aimed at attaining freedom from all forms of social domination.
- A critical engagement with the Enlightenment reason is at the centre of the critical theory of postmodern philosophy.
- 'Culture industry' refers to a culture of consumerism where pleasure and fun were sold as market products.
- Culture industry suggests the commodification of culture where the mass or the people are unable to think and accept commodified emotions and entertainment as natural and become passive consumers of the same.

- Critical theory attempted to examine and provide a critique of society and culture, and it tried to do so by borrowing knowledge from the broad world of social sciences.
- The subject of critical theory is "a definite individual in her real relation to other individuals and groups, in her conflict with a particular class, and finally in the resultant web of relationships with the social totality and with nature."
- While traditional theorists see the social scientist as independent of the object of study Critical theorists acknowledge that the social scientist is a part of the very society she studies, and so her viewpoints cannot be detached from her society she live in.



11.7 FURTHER READING

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11.8 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Critical theory includes a host of theories and philosophies which hold critical perspectives on cristing theories of human development.

Ans to Q No 2: Culture industry refers to a culture of consumption whereby entertainment, pleasure, etc, are commodified and sold like market products.

Ans to Q No 3: Jurgen Harbermas.

11.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: What was Frankfurt School? Briefly mention its primary features with reference to critical theory.

Q 2: Who coined the term 'culture industry'? Briefly describe the concept.

Q 3: Briefly differentiate between traditional theory and critical theory.

B) Long questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: 'Critical theory seeks to emancipate human beings from their conditions of domination.' Do you agree? Give your reasons with reference to the major critical theorists.

Q 2: How does critical theory differ from traditional theory? Elaborate with reference to Max Horkheimer's description of critical theory.

Q 3: Briefly examine Habermas's concept of public sphere and the significance of its transformation.

Q 4: Critically analyse Adorno's critique of Enlightenment.

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UNIT 12: ANTONIO GRAMSCI

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Work and Thought of Gramsci

12.4 Key Concepts of Gramsci's Theory

12.5 Gramsci's theory of class struggle

12.6 Let Us Sum Up

12.7 Further Reading

12.8 Answer to Check Your Progress

12.9 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand the early life and thoughts that influenced Gramsci's later work,
- explain the concept of hegemony, organic intellectuals, and
- discuss the theory of class struggle propounded by Gramsci.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

Antonio Franscesco Gramsci was a renowned Italian Marxist philosopher and politician. He wrote on a variety of subjects which included political theory,linguistics as well as Sociology.Gramsci is regarded as a neo-Marxist because he attempted to break from the traditional thought of economic determinism that Marxism was based upon.Gramsci was influenced by Karl Marx,Charles Darwin,Sigmund Freud,Freidrich Engels,Nietzsche to name a few. He was also a founding member and one-time leader of the Communist Party of Italy and was imprisoned by Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime.

Antonio Gramsci was born in Ales,on the island of Sardinia.Gramsci's father was of Arbereshe descent and his mother belonged to a local

landowning family. He had a troubled relationship with his father but had a close relation with his mother, whose resilience and art of story -telling had a lasting impression on him as a child.His family's poor financial conditions and trouble with the police forced the family to move from villages to villages in Sardinia until they finally settled in Ghilarza. In 1898 Fransesco was convicted of embezzlement and imprisoned reducing his family to destitution.The young Antonio had to abandon schooling and work at various casual jobs until his father was released in 1904.However he continued with his education privately and after graduating from secondary school, at the Dettori Lyceum in Cagliari, where he shared a room with his brother Gennaro, he came in contact for the first time with the organized sectors of the working class and with radical and socialist politics. This influence was about to shape his life and career immensely. As a boy Gramsci suffered from health problems particularly a malformation on the spine that stunned his growth and left him seriously hunch-backed.After completing his secondary school from Cagliari,in 1911 Gramsci won a scholarship to study at the University of Turin. At Turin, he developed a keen interest in linguistics which he studied under Matteo Bartoli.Gramsci's poor financial condition and health was an impediment in pursuing his studies, but meanwhile even though he abandoned his studies, he had gained an extensive knowledge of history and philosophy.

When in Turin,Gramsci also witnessed the massive changes occurring in Sardinia and in his mainland.Undergoing massive industrialization the Fiat and Lancia factories were recruiting workers from the poorer regions. These social transformations shaped his world-view and hence joined the Italian Socialist Party in late 1913.The outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917 further stirred his inclination towards revolutionary ardour and for the remaining of the war and in the years thereafter Gramsci identified himself closely, with the methods and aims of the Russian revolutionary leadership and with the cause of socialist transformation throughout the advanced capitalist world.

Gramsci was one of the most important Marxist thinkers of the 20th century and a particular key thinker in the development of Western Marxism.

His thoughts emanates from the organized left but was also an important figure in academic circles of cultural studies and critical theory. The political theorists from the right and the centre have also widely appreciated his concepts, as for instance Gramsci's concept of Hegemony was widely cited. His influence is particularly strong in contemporary political science. His work heavily influenced intellectual discourse on popular culture studies in which many have found the potential for political or ideological resistance to dominant government and business interests. In the previous unit we have discussed about the contributions made by the three important thinkers belonging to the Frankfurt School. In this unit we shall learn about the life and workers of Antonio Gramsci.

12.3 WORK AND THOUGHT OF GRAMSCI

The political and social writings of Antonio Gramsci can be broadly divided into two periods:pre prison(1910-1926) and prison(1929-35).The content of his pre-prison writings were politically inclined while his prison writings were more historical and theoretical in nature.

The years between,1921 to 1926 being intellectually productive and eventful, Gramsci claims this particular period of his life to be 'of iron and fire'. His column in the Turin edition of *Avanti*, and his theatre reviews were widely read and circulated. Gramsci gave wide public lectures within the study-circles of the workers, on various topics, as he felt a certain kind of affinity towards this particular class. However the intellectual writings of Gramsci in prison came to light only after several years of the World War II,when some of the scattered sections of the NOTEBOOKS as well as some of the letters he wrote from the prison, were published. By the 1950's his prison writings were published and circulated voraciously which also attracted wide interest and critical comments not only in the west but also in the developing countries. Some of his lexicons became dominant terminology for the Left as for instance the concept of 'hegemony' that he used dominantly in his work to explain the reasons both for the success and failure of the socialist vision on a global scale and realising the dream of socialist program through a feasible strategy within the existing conditions prevailing in the industrial world.

- **BOOKS WRITTEN BY ANTONIO GRAMSCI:**
  - Prison notebooks
  - An Antonio Gramsci Reader
  - Selections from cultural writings
  - The Southern Question
  - Letters from Prison
  - The Modern Prince and Other Writings
  - A Great and Terrible World



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who wrote the book 'Prison Notebooks'?

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GRAMSCI'S MARXISM:

Antonio Gramsci was perceptive in understanding the peculiar differences that existed between 1917 Russia and the more developed Western capitalist countries .And henceforth he elaborated and attempted to analyse class power from the purview of super-structural and infrastructural considerations. He attempted an acute analysis of the dialectical relationship between class power and class rule and how a sound revolutionary practice can evolve thereafter.

12.4 KEY CONCEPTS OF GRAMSCI'S THEORY

The concepts of ideology,hegemony and organic intellectuals are the three core concepts that constitute Gramsci's philosophy of praxis. The unity of the three concepts is striking because Gramsci frequently emphasised that ideology and the super-structure of civil society ought to be dealt objectively as economic consideration .These concepts address the complex nature of class power and outlines the essentials for a sound revolutionary struggle that can successfully challenge and overthrow the foundations of capitalist class rule and society.If *Lenin* stressed the importance of political leadership of the working class in the class struggle,

Gramsci gave importance to non-economic factors such as moral and intellectual leadership between classes in order to propagate class struggle. Here Gramsci deserves the credit of injecting the importance of ideology within the realm of genuine and revolutionary Marxism.

- **The concept of ideology in Gramsci's Marxism:**

Gramsci's concept of ideology was distinct and different from his predecessors because it overcame the tendency of **both epiphenomenalism and class reductionism** ,that most of his successors had a predilection for**. Ideological epiphenomenalism** consisted basically of the claim that the ideological superstructure was determined mechanically by the economic infrastructure and that ideology did not have any effective role in the economic life of the society and its supposed revolutionary character per se. The economic tensions and contradictions grounded in the economic mode of production,as asserted, lead to revolutionary antagonism. In simpler words,the tensions within the relations of production and forces of production coupled with the economic contradictions of the antagonistic classes led to a qualitative change in the institutional and ideological formation of the social system in crisis which would ultimately spill out to a revolution,implying the collapse of the capitalist systems.

Class reductionism,combining ideology and revolution argues that ideologies necessarily have a class character, that is, there is an ideology of the capitalist class and there is the ideology of the working class,both ideologies are antagonistic and mutually exclusive in its totality.

Antonio Gramsci redefined the term ideology in terms of practices,politico-ideological discourses, and elements.The most distinctive aspect of Gramsci's concept of ideology is his notion of **'organicideology**". Clearly ideology was defined in terms of a system of class rule that is, hegemony, in which there was an organic arrangement of all ideological elements into a unified system. This complex arrangement constituted an organic ideology the expression of the communal life of the given social bloc wherein a class held state power and hence social hegemony.Hence in a given hegemonic system,a hegemonic class held state power through its economic supremacy and through its ability to have among other things,

successfully articulated or expressed in a coherent, unified fashion the most essential elements in the ideological discourses of the subordinate classes in civil society. In this respect we can say that an organic ideology is diffused throughout civil society(social institutions and structures such as the family,churches,the media,the schools,the legal system and other organisations such as the trade union, chambers of commerce ,and economic associations)by virtue of the integration of the diverse class interests and practices in a unified system of socioeconomic relations.

Now, an organic ideology emanates from the dynamic function of articulation performed by social agents Gramsci called 'organic intellectuals'. And the very task of these 'organic intellectuals' is the responsibility of formulation and spreading of organic ideologies. In other words they are social agents bearing alliance to a hegemonic class or to a class aspiring for hegemony and ultimate state power.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: Who are 'organic intellectuals according to Gramsci?

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.....

The following section elaborates on Gramsci's concept of hegemony.

- **Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony :**

The concept of Hegemony was first introduced by Gramsci in his" Notes on the Southern Question"(1926) where 'hegemony' meant a simple class alliance and political leadership by including intellectual and moral leadership and the class alliance that ensued thereafter. However, a more mature and developed version was again initiated in his book "Prison Notebooks". Hence in the developed version of 'hegemony' entails two things: Firstly it presupposes that the 'hegemonic class' takes into consideration the interests of the classes and groups over which it exercises its 'hegemony'. Secondly, 'hegemony' stands to be a fundamental class that is, a class situated at one of the fundamental poles in the relations of production. This implies that the hegemony entails for a class, exercising

leadership role on the economic, political, moral and intellectual levels vis-à-vis other classes in the system. But this equilibrium is reached after the sacrifice of some corporate interests on the part of the hegemonic class in order to facilitate its vanguard role that is coercive imperative. This very notion of hegemony is explicit in the concept of power as propounded by Antonio Gramsci.

- **Gramsci's Concept of Power:**

For Gramsci, power is based on two moments of power relations-Dominio (or coercion) or Direzione (or consensus).These two moments of power are crucial for the sustenance of the equilibrium between the social forces identified as the leaders and the led. This state of balance consists of a coalition of classes constituting an organic totality within which the use of force is risky unless there emerges an organic crisis which threatens the hegemonic position and the ruling position of the leading class in the hegemonic system. Clearly political or state rule by a hegemonic class so defined will be a rule in which consensus predominates coercion. According to Gramsci, consensus lies in the civil society and hence must be won there. On the other hand coercion lies in the hands of the State, more specifically at the levels of the 'political society'. Accordingly hegemonic rule characterised by the predominance of consensus over coercion, represents in broad terms a balance between the 'political society' or the State and 'civil society'. Needless to say, for Gramsci the state embodies 'hegemony of one social group over the whole of society exercised through the so-called private institutions such as the church, trade unions, schools, etc in balance with the ensemble of public(coercive)organizations such as the state, the bureaucracy, the military, the police and the courts. Thus state power rests on alternated moments of force and consensus but without the necessity of predominance of coercion over consensus.

We can further add that in any given hegemonic system undergoing organic crisis, a subaltern but fundamental class aspiring for state power in that system must function to attain hegemony within the civil society by challenging the dominant class on one hand and conforming itself to the interests and aspirations of the other subaltern classes as well. This is termed

as 'predominance by consent' (legitimacy of rule) and gaining the legitimacy to rule vis-à-vis the other classes within the system.

To further explain the meaning of rule by consent/legitimacy of rule Gramsci falls back upon his concept of **ideology**. According to Gramsci, hegemony ('predominance by consent') is a condition in which a fundamental class exercises a political, intellectual and moral role of leadership within a hegemonic system cemented together by a common worldview or 'organic ideology'. The exercise of this role on political and economic sphere of the system involves the process of intellectual and moral reform through which there is a 'transformation of the previous ideological terrain and a redefinition of hegemonic structures and institutions into a new form. This transformation and redefinition is achieved through a re-articulation of ideological elements into a new world-view which then serves as the unifying principle for a 'new collective will.' And it is in this new world view that unifies the system and the subaltern classes within it for a new hegemonic bloc which constitutes the new organic ideology of the new hegemonic class and system. Yet, we need to infer that this new organic ideology is not imposed neither complete replacement of the previous world-view by the hegemonic class over the subaltern groups. Rather this 'new' world view is 'created' or 'moulded' by the aspiring hegemonic class and its consensual subaltern classes out of the existing ideological elements held by the latter in their discourses. The creation of this new organic ideology is realised dialectically through 'ideological struggle', that is, in other words taking into cognizance the ideological elements of the other social classes, redefining, rearticulating, moulding and unifying them as a new collective will of the system or society. Here, Gramsci rejecting the notion of ideology having a class character, maintains that ideological elements have no necessary class belonging and are in fact often shared by many classes, and since the new hegemonic system rests on ideological consensus of other social classes, hegemony is not ideological domination.

- **Gramsci's Concept Of 'Organic Intellectuals'**

For Gramsci, 'intellectuals' are a broader group of social agents that includes not only scholars and artists or in his own term 'organisers of

culture' but also functionaries who exercise 'technical' or 'directive' capacities in society. Among them we find administrators and bureaucrats, industrial managers and politicians. Moreover, Gramsci classifies these intellectuals in two dimensions:

- Vertical dimension
- Horizontal dimension

On the vertical dimension we find the 'specialists' those who organize industry particularly for the 'capitalists' (including the industrial managers and foreman). Here,we also find the 'directions'- the organisers of the society in general.

On the horizontal dimension,Gramsci classifies intellectuals either as traditional or as organic intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals are those intellectuals linked to tradition; those who are not directly linked to the economic structure of their society; have no affiliation to any particular class or political discourse.Organic intellectuals on the other hand, are related to the economic structure of their society and are important because they are the ones who actually elaborate and spread organic ideology. This class of intellectuals "gives his class homogeneity and awareness of its own function, in the economic field and on the political and social levels". Nevertheless, Gramsci is also clear about the positionality of these intellectuals within the horizontal dimension in the super-structural level of society and delineates the differences between "organic intellectuals" belonging to the dominant and working class.Hence organic intellectuals, part of the dominant class, provide personnel for the coercive organs of the political society.Yet, in the struggle of a class aspiring for hegemony, its organic intellectuals operate in order to achieve for direct consensus and as such have no position in the coercive political structures to operate on a coercive basis. They are instrumental in a class' struggle for hegemony as to assimilate and conquer over the traditional intellectuals of other classes and to create a system of solidarity and remain progressive to shaken the base of the capitalist society.

12.5 GRAMSCI'S THEORY OF CLASS STRUGGLE

For Gramsci, before exercising state power, the working class must attain leadership-that is, "establish its claim to be a ruling class in the political, cultural and ethical fields. But for it to establish its claim to be a ruling class, the proletariat must first have class consciousness in the context of struggle for political power". Here, Gramsci distinguishes between two phases in the process:first there is the corporate-economic phase in which the class identifies itself in terms of the corporate-economic phase in which the class identifies itself in terms of the corporate-economic interests of its integrated elements and as an economic group. Then there is the pure "political phase" in which the class realises that its own economic interests go beyond the circle of a mere economic group, and can and must become the interests of the oppressed groups. This is the purely political phase "which marks the passage from structure to superstructures". At this point when the proletariat realise of itself as a social class,the proletariat can then function to develop a comprehensive world-view (organic ideology)and advance a political programme and play out the role of a progressive political party seeking to absorb the aspirations and interests of the other leading subaltern classes.And it is in such distinct contexts the class struggle changes from a 'war of maneouver' to a 'war of position'

Gramsci argues that the evolution of the working class out of the simple economic struggle into the field of complex political struggle and entering into the cultural front as an ideological struggle is termed as 'war of position'. And it is in this ideological struggle the proletariat "attempts to forge unity between economic,political and intellectual objectives and elevates from a struggle at the corporate level to the universal level and involves in the articulation-disarticulation of given and existing ideological elements.

Here, Gramsci reflects that ideology can never have a class character and is wrong to be reduced into a mere confrontation between two antagonistic classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat) .Rather, it is the actual struggle between two hegemonic principles for the "appropriation" and not

imposition of ideological elements that may result in the eventual disarticulation of the previous ideological terrain and the re-articulation of ideological elements into a new form which then expresses a new collective will and serves as the basis for new consensus and effective hegemonic rule. This method and strategy for revolution by attaining hegemony converge dialectically and become of practical relevance to the proletariat to shake the foundations of the capitalist society.



12.6 LET US SUM UP

- Antonio Gramsci rejected economic determinism of traditional Marxist thinkers and gave importance to non -economic factors such as ideology and culture wherein the ruling class or the capitalist society ruled over the working class with consent.
- This hegemony is attained by a mixture of both consent and coercion in the “political society” and “civil society”.
- Gramsci expanded the understanding of Marxian theory with the help of three basic concepts viz ideology, hegemony and organic intellectuals and made an objective theorization how, the ruling capitalist class that is the bourgeoisie class establishes and also maintains its coercion over the working class without any violence but by consent.
- This consent is attained in the ‘civil society’ through Ideology together with the political and economic coercion of the ‘political society’.



12.7 FURTHER READING

1) Althusser, Louis (1977). *For Marx*. London: New Left Books..
2) Althusser, Louis. (2001). *Lenin and Philosophy*. New York: Monthly Review Press
3) Gramsci, Antonio. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.

12.8 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Antonio Gramsci

Ans to Q No 2: Organic intellectuals are a class of social agents who bear alliance to a hegemonic class and are responsible for spreading organic ideologies.

12.9 MODEL QUESTIONS:

A) Short Questions: (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: Who are the Organic Intellectuals?

Q2: What does Gramsci imply by the term “hegemony”?

Q3: How did Gramsci conceptualise power?

B) Long Questions: (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Elucidate Antonio Gramsci’s criticism of traditional Marxism and analyse his understanding of class struggle.

Q2: Describe the main tenants of Gramsci’s theory of praxis.

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UNIT 13: LOUIS ALTHUSSER

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Theories of State

13.4 Reproduction

13.5 Revolutionary Science

13.6 Politics

13.7 Relative Autonomy

13.8 Over Determination

13.9 Lets Us Sum Up

13.10 Further Reading

13.11 Answer To Check Your Progress

13.12 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand the contribution of Althusser within the Marxist tradition.
- explain his theories of State, relative autonomy, over determination and reproduction.
- discuss the contradictions and dynamics within Marxist theories.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

Louis Pierre Althusser was one of the most influential Marxist philosophers of the 20th century. As it was intended to offer a renewal of Marxist thought as well as to render Marxism philosophically respectable, the claims he advanced in the 1960s about Marxist philosophy were discussed and debated worldwide. Despite being anthologised and translated during the mid 1990s, there has, until recently, been relatively liitle critical attention paid to Althusser's writings prior to 1961. His contribution to Marxist tradition by reviving Marxist theories is useful to sociological

understanding. Thus this Unit tries to put light on various Althusser's theories that pave a new way of understanding Marxism.

13.3 THEORIES OF STATE

According to the Marxist tradition, the State is explicitly conceived of as a repressive apparatus. The State is a 'machine' of repression, which enables the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion (i.e. to capitalist exploitation). The State is thus first of all what the Marxists have called the State Apparatus. This term not only includes the legal determinants of the State which includes the police, court, prison but also the army, the head of the State, the government and the administration. Therefore it can be said that the State Apparatus, which defines the State as a force of repressive execution and intervention ' in the interests of the ruling classes' in the class struggle conducted by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat, is quite certainly the State, and quite certainly defines its basic 'function'.

According to Althusser, this presentation of the nature of the State is still partly descriptive. This descriptive theory of the State according to him is without a shadow of doubt the irreversible beginning of the theory and this descriptive form in which the theory is presented requires, precisely as an effect of this 'contradiction', a development of the theory which goes beyond the form of 'description'. Thus the descriptive theory of the State represents a phase in the constitution of the theory which itself demands the 'supersession' of this phase. For Althusser, every descriptive theory runs the risk of 'blocking' the development of the theory, and yet the development is essential. Therefore, in order to understand further the mechanisms of the State in its functioning, it is indispensible to add something to the classical definition of the State as a State Apparatus.

By explaining the above transition from descriptive theory to theory, Althusser tries to provide his own theory of the State. According to him, the State has no meaning except as a function of State power. The whole of the political class struggle revolves around the State. This means the seizure

and conservation of State power by a certain class or by an alliance between classes or class fractions. The distinction between State and State power was put forward by Marx and claimed that 1) the state is the repressive state apparatus 2) state power and state apparatus must be distinguished 3) the objective of the class struggle concerns state power, and in consequence the use of the state apparatus by the classes holding state power as a function of their class objectives and 4) the proletariat must seize state power in order to destroy the existing bourgeois state apparatus and, in a first phase, replace it with quite different, proletarian, state apparatus, then in later phases set in motion a radical process, that of the destruction of the state.

Inspite of explaining the difference between State, State Apparatus and State power, according to Althusser, the Marxist theory of State was descriptive in nature. In turn, Althusser tried to advance the theory of the State by bringing in the concept of Ideological State Apparatuses.

Ideological State Apparatuses are different from Repressive State Apparatuses. Repressive State Apparatuses consists of the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, and the Prisons as discussed above. These State apparatuses 'function by violence'. On the other hand, the following institutions are regarded as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) by Althusser :

- The religious ISA
- The educational ISA
- The family ISA
- The legal ISA
- The political ISA
- The trade union ISA
- The communications ISA
- The cultural ISA

- The differences between Repressive State Apparatuses and Ideological State Apparatuses include:
  - There is a plurality of Ideological State Apparatuses as opposed to one Repressive State Apparatus

- The Repressive State Apparatus belongs entirely to the public domain whereas much of the larger part of the Ideological State Apparatuses belong to the private domain.
- The Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence' whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function 'by ideology'.

In discussing this fact, Althusser makes the point clear that both Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatus function by violence and ideology. In respect to Repressive State Apparatus, it functions by violence primarily and secondarily it functions by ideology. On the other hand Ideological State Apparatus functions primarily by ideology and secondarily by repression. From this Althusser states that no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses.

13.4 REPRODUCTION

Marx explained historical materialism by bringing in the concept of modes of production. Modes of production consist of means of production and relations of production. Means of production consists of land, natural resources, technology, labour that are necessary for the production of material goods. Relations of production on the other hand consist of social relationships people enter into as they acquire and use the means of production. Marx observed that within any given society, the mode of production changes as the means of production and relations of production change. The ultimate condition of production according to Marx is the reproduction of the conditions of production. This may be simple (reproducing exactly the previous conditions of production) or on an extended scale (expanding them). In order to exist, every social formation followed by the modes of production must reproduce the conditions of its production at the same time as it produces, and in order to be able to produce. It must therefore reproduce the productive forces and the existing relations of production. In relation to the productive forces, Althusser puts light on another dimension – the reproduction of labour power. The reproduction of labour power reveals not only the reproduction of its skills but also the reproduction of its subjection

to the ruling class ideology or of the practise of that ideology as it is in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labour power.

In order to explain the reproduction of the relations of production, Althusser brings in the above discussed concepts of Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatuses. The role of the repressive State apparatus, insofar as it is a repressive apparatus, consists essentially in securing by force the political conditions of the reproduction of relations of production which are in the last resort relations of exploitation. Apart from this, the Ideological State Apparatuses largely secure the reproduction of the relations of production behind a 'sheild' provided by the repressive State apparatus. It is here that the role of the ruling ideology is heavily concentrated, on the ideology of the ruling class, which holds State power. It is the intermediation of the ruling ideology that ensures a harmony between the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses, and between the different Ideological State Apparatuses. It is this interconnectedness created by the ruling class that leads to the reproduction of relations of production. Althusser in this regard, sums up that:

- All Ideological State Apparatuses, whatever they are, contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation.
- Each of them contributes towards this single result in the way proper to it. For example, the political apparatus does so by subjecting individuals to the political State ideology. The communication apparatus does so by cramming every citizen with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc, by means of the press, the radio and television.
- This process is dominated by the Ideology of the current ruling class.
- Nevertheless one Ideological State Apparatus certainly has the dominant role and that is the School.

Thus both Repressive and Ideological State apparatus play a determinant role in the reproduction of the relations of production of a mode of production threatened by its existence by the world class struggle.

13.5 REVOLUTIONARY SCIENCE

Althusser has exerted a considerable influence on both the form and content of current debates on Marxist and revolutionary theory. With his rigour and plea for a 'scientific' Marxism freed from all 'ideological' trappings such as humanism, Althusser tries to represent a new point of departure from Marxist theory. His new departure is achieved by a reinterpretation of old texts in the course of which he elaborates an abstract theoretical system supposed to represent a statement of correct Marxist science and theory. This reinterpretation is not merely passive, but one in which Althusser brings his own knowledge and his training in philosophy to bear so that one has both Althusser's restatement of classical Marxism together with insights and theories of his own.

Althusser's goal is to establish a certain image and interpretation of Marxism, from the point of view of both form (the epistemological status of Marxism) and content (the actual discoveries which Marxist science has made). His main focus has been an investigation of Marxist philosophy, particularly epistemology- the theory of knowledge. In his own terminology, he is concerned with a 'theory about theory' and a theory of science.

Althusser holds the epistemological position that all questions of knowledge and action are best answered by the methods of the natural sciences and the natural sciences on their own can explain any and all phenomena. Although Althusser certainly endorsed scientific practise, he did not believe that all questions of knowledge and action are best answered by the methods of natural sciences. For instance, he argued that artistic and philosophical practices can produce critical awareness of the world and that these practices can even lead to social transformations. He also did not think that the natural sciences can explain or give the truth of any phenomenon or that the social world and its history can be explained wholly by appeal to the laws of the natural world. He believed even less that the social sciences could give us the truth of ourselves, of our individual and collective natures, or of our future social and economic arrangements. Therefore his work does not exactly fit in the definition of scientism. Inspite

of this, Althusser consistently argued that science is the only human theoretical practise that allows us to reliably understand socio-politico-economic structures such that one might intentionally assist in their transformation. Science, and more specifically the Marxist science of history, historical materialism, can do so, he argued, because it allows us to understand the origin of our ideological notions about what is good for society and about what is to be done politically. It also allows us to critique these notions and to replace them with scientific understandings of why we think and act the way we do. In turn, this knowledge allows us to develop new plans for political actions, the ones based on a critical and scientific understanding of the actual processes at work in a particular historical conjecture and of its possible transformation. Unlike ideological practice, which tends to reproduce of existing socio-economic relations, one of the most important things of historical materialism for Althusser is that, once inaugurated, its practise tends to replace existing ideas about our social and natural relations and to generate new and politically reliable knowledge about the world. This new awareness and this new knowledge of social relations is practical knowledge or knowledge for practise. Insofar it is correct, it allows us to change ourselves and to change our world. This according to Althusser is revolutionary science where science for him is historical materialism.

According to Althusser, Marxist science or historical materialism differs from other social sciences in terms of its object, the history of class struggle, and in terms of its method, which is synthetic and critical. However it does not differ in terms of being a science as it makes use of a body of concepts and abstractive practices including experimentation, observation, and quantification to develop new knowledge.

13.6 POLITICS

Althusser equated politics to ideology. In ‘The German Ideology’, ideology is conceived of as a pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness. All its reality is external to it. Ideology is thus thought to be an imaginary construction. According to Althusser, ideology for Marx is an imaginary

assemblage, a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the 'day's residues' from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence. Thus Althusser summarises this by putting light on two important points:

- Ideology is nothing in so far as it is a pure dream.
- Ideology has no history, which emphatically does not mean that there is no history in it but that it has no history of its own.
- In order to understand the structure and functioning of ideology, Althusser postulates three theses:
  - **Ideology is a 'Representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence**.

    It is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them. It is this relation which is at the centre of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world. It is this relation that contains the 'cause' which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world. In order to advance the thesis, it is necessary to advance the thesis in which it is the imaginary nature of the relations which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe in all ideology. To speak in a Marxist sense, if it is true that the representation of the real conditions of existence of the individuals occupying the posts of agents of production, exploitation, repression, ideologisation and scientific practise arise from the relations of production, it can be said that all ideologies represent in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them. What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.

- **Ideology has a material existence**

The main idea of ideology recognises, despite its imaginary distortion, that the 'ideas' of a human subject exist in his actions, or ought to exist in his actions, and if that is not the case, it lends him other ideas corresponding to the actions that he performs. These actions are inserted into practices. These practices are governed by rituals inscribed in the practices within the material existence of an ideological apparatus. From this Althusser notes down two conjoint points that there is no practise except by and in an ideology and that there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects. Ideas have disappeared as such, to the precise extent that it has emerged that their existence is inscribed in the actions of practices governed by rituals defined in the last instance by an ideological apparatus. It therefore appears that the subject acts insofar as he is acted upon by the following system: ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief.

- **Ideology interpellates individuals as subjects**.

There is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects. There is no ideology except for concrete subjects, and this destination for ideology is only made possible by the subject: by the category of the subject and it's functioning. The category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects. In the interaction of this double constitution exists the functioning of all ideology, ideology being nothing but its functioning in the material forms of existence of that functioning. All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by functioning of the category of the subject. Ideology acts or functions in such a way that it recruits subjects among the individuals or transforms the individuals into subjects by the very

precise operation known as interpellation. Also, individuals are always – already subjects. They are subjects even before they are born.

13.7 RELATIVE AUTONOMY

Althusser argues that Marx sees society as 'infrastructure' (economic base, forces of production and relations of production) and 'superstructure' which has two levels, political legal (law and the state) and ideological. The superstructure cannot exist independently of the base. In the last instance the base determines the superstructure. Althusser suggests that this leads to two different Marxist emphases:

1) 'Relative autonomy' of the superstructure.
2) 'Reciprocal action' of the superstructure on the base.

For Marx, the 'edifice' metaphor of base and superstructure is useful as a descriptive account pointing to the relation of superstructure and base as it emphasises the importance of determination, the ultimate role of the base in this determination, and the complexity of this determining process. For Althusser, there is no simple economic determination but a complex relationship between base and the superstructure such that while base determines superstructure in the last instance, there is a relative autonomy of superstructure from base. Althusser refines this: 'the economy determines for the non-economic elements their respective degrees of autonomy/ dependence in relation to itself and to one another, thus their differential degrees of specific effectivity. It can determine itself as dominant or non dominant at any particular time, and in the latter case it determines which of the other elements is to be dominant.

13.8 OVER DETERMINATION

Althusser's over determination is a relentless critique of all forms of essentialism. In epistemology, it deconstructs the binary opposition between empiricism and rationalism by revealing their shared commitment to essentialism. On one hand, Althusser rejects all kinds of essentialism as bourgeois epistemology, and on the other, he rebuffs Marxist versions of

essentialism as the survival and re-emergence of bourgeois thinking inside Marxism. In ontology, Althusserian over determination also displaces the oppositional dichotomy between materialism and idealism. It lays bare their underlying assumption that any given totality, however complex in its appearance or surface, can be analysed to reveal its essence at its core or in its depth- whether this essence be material or ideal and whether this essence be found in the first or last analysis.

By using the term over determination, Althusser makes it possible to finally liberate Marxism not only from economic determinism but also from determinisms of all stripes. According to him, the mode of production is the determinant factor but only in the final analysis, and that the economic situation is the basis. But the various elements of the superstructure- the political forms of the class struggle and its results, to with constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc, juridical forms, and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, artistic, juristic, philosophical theoriesm, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas-also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles, and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. Althusser argues that this sheds light on his concept of 'overdetermination.' From this point of view, the superstructure exercises as much influence on the base as the other way round.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Name the two types of State Apparatuses.

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.....

Q 2: Name three Ideological State Apparatuses.

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.....

Q 3: Define ideology.

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.....

Q 4: State the theses to support the definition of ideology.

.....

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Q 5: What is over determination according to Althusser?

.....

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13.9 LET US SUM UP

- Louis Pierre Althusser was one of the most influential Marxist philosophers of the 20th century.
- The State is a 'machine' of repression, which enables the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion.
- According to Althusser, this presentation of the nature of the State is still partly descriptive.
- By explaining the transition from descriptive theory to theory, Althusser tries to provide his own theory of the State. According to him, the State has no meaning except as a function of State power.
- In turn, Althusser tried to advance the theory of the State by bringing in the concept of Ideological State Apparatuses.
- Ideological State Apparatuses are different from Repressive State Apparatuses.
- Both Repressive and Ideological State apparatus play a determinant role in the reproduction of the relations of production of a mode of production threatened by its existence by the world class struggle.
- Science for Althusser is historical materialism.
- Althusser equated politics to ideology.
- According to Althusser, ideology for Marx is an imaginary assemblage, a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the 'day's residues' from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence.

- For Althusser, there is no simple economic determination but a complex relationship between base and the superstructure such that while base determines superstructure in the last instance, there is a relative autonomy of superstructure from base.
- By using the term over determination, Althusser makes it possible to finally liberate Marxism not only from economic determinism but also from determinisms of all stripes.



13.10 FURTHER READING

1) Althusser, L. (2001). "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards An Investigation)," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster. New York Monthly Review Press.



13.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Repressive and Ideological State Apparatus.

Ans to Q No 2: Religious, Educational and Family.

Ans to Q No 3: According to Althusser, ideology for Marx is an imaginary assemblage, a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the 'day's residues' from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence.

Ans to Q No 4: 1) Ideology is a 'Representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. 2) Ideology has a material existence. 3) Ideology interpellates individuals as subjects.

Ans to Q No 5: For Marx, it is the economic base that has influence over the superstructure. This is over determination. Althusser came up with an alternative where he states that the superstructure exercises as much influence on the base as the other way round.



13.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Distinguish between Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatuses.

Q 2: Explain relative autonomy.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Define ideology. State its characteristics.

Q 2: Explain over determination with reference to Marxist analysis of base superstructure model.

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UNIT 14: PETER L.BERGER AND THOMAS LUCKMANN

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Social construction of Reality: Meaning and Definition

- 14.3.1 Foundation of Knowledge in Everyday Life
- 14.3.2 Society as Objective Reality
- 14.3.3 Society as Subjective Reality

14.4 Let Us Sum Up

14.5 Further Reading

14.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.7 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand social construction of reality
- to know the foundation of knowledge in everyday life
- discuss society's function as the objective and subjective reality.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

As human beings we tend to believe things as real or unreal when it is presented before us. When aspects of reality satisfy our belief system, we accord them the status of a 'reality'. But as opinions, views and mindset of individuals differ, what is real for us may be unreal for some and there may be different judgments for it. Any 'reality' will have knowledge by its side. Possession of knowledge will vary again with individuals. Reality and knowledge may be taken for granted but for some reality will be interpreted from a different dimension thus, constructing the reality according to a person's knowledge or convenience of facts gathered or known. Even in our everyday lives, we can refer to incidents where a 'reality' or a fact known

to us, is created among us with variety of thoughts, actions and explanations, it ultimately gets created with a new twist and concept. This is where people's reaction and role get changed. This is where reality is said to be constructed by the society or rather socially constructed. In this unit, we shall learn about the foundation of knowledge in everyday life, society as objective reality and society as subjective reality. While doing so we shall focus on the key ideas propounded by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their highly acclaimed work 'The Social Construction of Reality'.

14.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY: MEANING AND DEFINITION

The social construction of reality as a theory puts emphasis on the importance of knowledge. As we are aware that being knowledgeable is important, this theory simply does not focus on theoretical knowledge but also on the knowledge about the social world, customs, values, wisdom, morals etc,. In the society, many a times we accept reality not as a product or result of our own experience or doing but on the basis of what is being socially accepted by the masses. This implies that reality is constructed and we tend to take it for granted. Reality is shaped through interaction and socialization among people whereas our perception of reality is shaped by the beliefs, values or the backgrounds of family and society. A clear example of social construction of reality is the material pursuits of a rich man and a poor man. For a rich or wealthy man, material possessions within regular intervals might be of utmost importance because those are his needs which he has been fulfilling since childhood. Whereas a poor man may be filled with anger when he sees the lifestyle of the rich man as according to him these pursuits are not necessary. This happens because the poor man had been leading a simple life since his childhood and his belief system has been shaped accordingly.

As reality is said to be socially constructed, the sociology of knowledge needs to analyze the process in which the construction of reality takes place. Reality can be defined as phenomena having its independent character where we cannot use our volition or will. Whereas knowledge

may be defined as the truth or certainty that phenomena which are real possess some specific characteristics. Again we need to know that a lay man and a sociologist will have different interpretations for phenomena in terms of reality and knowledge. For example: for a lay man, marriage signifies a family and thus progeny. Whereas for a sociologist, marriage will be seen a social institution having the family patterns, forms of marriages within different communities, practices, rituals etc.

14.3.1 Foundations of knowledge in everyday life

As we know there is base or foundation for every structure or pattern in the society, similarly knowledge too has foundations upon which reality stands and is interpreted by people according to the activities going on in the ordinary life. The foundations of knowledge are divided into three parts. They will be discussed as below.

- **The reality of everyday life**: Under this foundation, the common sense of ordinary life and the world of everyday life fall under 'reality', where they are shaped by one's thought and actions. Therefore everyday life is not taken for granted by the members of the society. The foundation of knowledge rests upon the phenomenological analysis or reflections of direct sense perceptions or observation. Consciousness is included within the framework of knowledge which is always intentional or is rather directed towards objects. We tend to remain conscious of some phenomena which we have experienced earlier. For example: someone being scratched by a cat, then remembrance of being scratched by it, gradually developing some phobia or fear about the cat , being conscious of not to confront a cat intentionally in near time and so on. Here we can say the tension of consciousness is highest. The 'here' and 'now' of reality refers to the degrees of closeness or remoteness of a person to situations and 'here' and 'now' is shaped by means to communication and interaction with one another. The 'here and

now' implies that there will be zones which will be accessible by a pragmatic situation and zones which will be far from our physical presence. Thus structures of reality have their knowledge in various grounds of thoughts, actions, consciousness and communication.

- **Social interactions in everyday life:** People interact with one another everyday and this is where the reality of everyday life is shared. Face to face interactions serve as a vital point, for it opens up various symptoms, expressions and subjectivity of communication. The activity of the other person in a face to face interaction is fully real because his/her ongoing actions are presented before us whereas our own actions may be less real for a self experience or action may have interruptions or past reflections. Face to face interactions are said to be flexible i.e. the other actor's behavior will be presented before us as it is even though we may have earlier notions of other actor's negative attitude. Again there will be typifications, example being that we may know a person by certain traits or profession, thus our interaction will be guided on those patterns until and unless we realize that his traits are different from earlier what was known. Similarly there will be a reciprocal relation from the other actor i.e. he/she shall have certain typifications about the first actor too. In an interaction there is a degree of anonymity which is determined by the degree of closeness or interest for a person. For example: our degree of intimacy or closeness will be more with our family members than say with a shopkeeper.
- **Language and knowledge in everyday life:** Beyond face to face situations there are other aspects or determiners of everyday life which enhance human expressions among individuals. First, the products are manufactured by producers and consumed by people. They are objectivations through which expressions are portrayed. For example, a joyous moment may be objectivated by means of buying chocolates. A second case of objectivation

is the human production and usage of signs. Signs may be distinguished from other objectivations by its nature to serve subjective meanings which may be deviated from its originality. For example, chocolates may have been produced to serve as a sweet delicacy but they have been used to greet people even in happiness and joy. Sign system may take various forms like bodily movements, facial expressions, signs of different cultures and so on. The everyday communications or objectivations are shaped by an important sign system known as language which is the vocal sign. Other vocal expressions like howl, snarl, and grunt do not fall under language but are means of certain expressions. Language is used for understanding the reality of everyday life: it is also preserved to pass on to other generations and exchange the transmission of signs. Face to face situation is carried on by language and its role of reciprocity by the thought process. For example, one speaks as he thinks and so the other actor too. Language shares a relation with the symbols which give a new dimension to the reality of everyday life.

14.3.2 Society as Objective Reality

Human beings share a relation with the environment through which he establishes his activities. He as an organism gradually develops his human self in the socially determined environment. Similarly he interrelates with the social order and cultural environment where he develops his activities, constructs his nature and produces himself in accordance with the varying situations in the societal activity or functions. The social order is said to be a human product or an ongoing human production and cannot be derived from the laws of nature. In the process of externalization of man's interaction with the environment, the social order is said to be produced by human activity which is driven by biological facts.

Now to study the production, emergence, maintenance and transmission of the social order, the theory of institutionalization

needs to be analyzed. We know that human beings perform their activity everyday which takes the form of a habit. For example, we get up from sleep in the morning, then take a walk or do yoga, get fresh, have breakfast, go for work and so on. These activities form a pattern or a habitualization process and a stock of knowledge to be remembered. The habitualised human activity is again reciprocated by the process of institutionalization where the latter has a history of control. In the above example, these activities may have been the routine of a particular family, whereby the institution of family controls the other members through its implication of routine, directs its activity and controls the pattern imposed. The institutions exist as external reality and a person has to follow its pattern even though the mechanisms of the institutions may be understandable to him. He must go beyond, try to explore what lies in the institutions and learn them. It must be remembered that the objectivity of the institutional world attained by externalized products of human activity is called objectivation which is a human construction and a production. The process of externalization and objectivation is a dialectical one i.e. man and his social world keep interacting with one another. Another process of internalization in the moment of dialectical one consists in retrojecting into the consciousness of the man in the socialization process.

The institutions need to have legitimation not because of their massive character but as they get transmitted to the next generations as a tradition, the institutions have to be in justification and explanation. Legitimation implies both values and knowledge which give new meanings to institutions. The institutions need to have sanctions and authority in order to make the new generation conform to the principles. Language plays a vital role in the objectivated social world where the linguistic domain forms the edifice of legitimations. There are four different levels of legitimation. First is the incipient legitimation which is present as a system of linguistic objectifications when human experience is transmitted. For example,

a child will learn about 'cousin' or 'grandparents', a kinship vocabulary which legitimizes the kinship structure. Second is the legitimation containing theoretical positions in a rudimentary form. For example, proverbs, wise sayings etc, belong to this level which is pragmatic and related to actions undertaken in our life. Third level of legitimation contains explicit theories of legitimated stock of knowledge which are transmitted to others through specific personnel. For example, any kinship terminology and usage will be explained to the younger ones by an older person. Last level of legitimation is the symbolic universe which contains the bodies of theoretical tradition that have different provinces of meanings and realities rather than those of everyday experience. For example, experiences in a dream or hallucination are detached from reality and their meanings may be endowed with a peculiar reality of their own.

A small part of the human experiences get retained in consciousness which become sedimented or remains as residue that stay as memorable entity for the future. These memorable entity passes on to other generations as tradition with the help of language where the sedimented experiences can be recollected with the aid of linguistic ability. Individuals belonging to any social institution, have roles to play. These roles are objectified linguistically and form an integral part of the objective reality of the society. When these objectified roles are internalized by the individuals, the social world gets transformed into a subjective reality for the individual. As roles belong to institutions, they represent the institutional order in two forms. First, performances of the role represent itself. For example, to engage in acting is to represent the role of actor. Second, the role represents an entire connection of conduct. For example, the actor acts in relation to other actors, which therefore represents the institution of entertainment.

To conclude we may say that reality is socially defined and the changes studied are allowed by the institutions to define reality. Habitualization, legitimation, roles and institutions, all form a part of the reality of the society objectively defined by the individual.

14.3.3 Society as Subjective Reality

The society is for the individuals, but an individual is not born a member of the society. Rather he becomes a member of the society in due course of time. He brings with him certain predispositions and through a temporal sequence of events, the individual is inducted into society. This social participation is internalization of events which is an objective reality at first but later its meanings are subjectively verified by the individual.

An individual becomes a member of the society by the process of internalization of meanings and events. This takes place through two process of socialization: primary socialization and secondary socialization. The primary socialization is the first socialization which an individual undergoes in childhood through which he becomes a member of the society. Secondary socialization is the process of inducting an already socialized person into new sectors or branches of the objective world of his society.

We first look into the aspects of primary socialization. It is the most integral part of an individual upon which the basic structure of secondary socialization rests. An individual encounters a significant other into the objective social structure where he is born into. The significant others are in charge of the individual's socialization process and the former is imposed upon the latter. Primary socialization is said to be a purely cognitive process where the child learns from his/her significant others and is attached emotionally. An identification process is involved along with the process of internalization. The roles, behavior and attitude of the significant others is internalized by the child and makes it his own. Thus the objective reality of the significant other is subjectively acquired by the child making it a dialectic process between them. Primary socialization creates a process of progressive abstraction or ideas in the child's consciousness from roles of a specific other to roles and attitudes in general. For example, the act of running in the

concrete area of the house may make the child fall and this make his mother more protective. Thus he shall form idea that running anywhere having a concrete base will make him fall and make all other persons protective about the child. This implies that the child identifies himself with role of one significant other (here is the mother) to roles of many significant others (other persons) which is called the generalized other. Thus what is real outside will turn to real within or from objective reality to subjective reality. Language plays an important role in the internalization of motivations and qualities by a child. Specific contents of everyday roles, habits or values will be applicable to the child immediately and rest at a later stage of life. This can be communicated through the aid of language. For example, the values of honesty and bravery will inspire him to retain the same in childhood as well as at later stage of life. Primary socialization involves sequence of learning at every stage and he acquires social recognition accordingly.

Secondary socialization takes place after an individual passes through primary socialization in his childhood. It is said to be the internalization of the institutional or institution based sub-worlds. The complexity of the division of labor and accompanying stock of knowledge determine the character of secondary socialization. The process of acquiring role-specific knowledge and infusion of roles directly or indirectly rooted in the division of labor is associated with secondary socialization. The sub-worlds in secondary socialization are said to be partial realities in contrast to the base-world acquired in primary socialization. A body of knowledge is required to learn certain traits in secondary socialization. For example, training is required to master the art of archery.

Secondary socialization is to deal with a formed self of primary socialization. This sometimes poses as a problem because new contents of secondary socialization have to be infused with an already formed self of primary socialization where there might be attempts to resist a change given by secondary socialization. By

now we know that primary socialization takes place when a child is emotionally attached and identified with his significant other, whereas most secondary socialization takes place with minimum or mutual identification in the process of communication between individuals. The reality placed by the significant other is the reality for the child in primary socialization whereas, secondary socialization recognizes specific institutional contexts as his reality. The reality of primary socialization many a time breaks down in later part of life whereas the reality of secondary socializations is easy to interpret or set aside. The reality and knowledge in primary socialization is quasi-automatic as the home is regarded as ultimate reality for the child while in secondary socialization the reality of knowledge is infused through some contexts or specific pedagogic techniques. For example: mother tongue is the first language acquired during childhood but gradually as one develops and grows, he/she may learn the art of learning new languages.

It is to be noted that socialization takes place within a social structure. The socio-structural conditions and socio-cultural consequences determine the success of socialization. Successful socialization defines the establishment of a high degree of symmetry between objective and subjective realities and it occurs in societies of simple division of labor and minimal distribution of knowledge. When different significant others mediate variety of objective realities into the individual, unsuccessful socialization is said to occur. Again, identity is said to be a key element of subjective reality which is formed by social processes. It stands in dialectical relation with the society. The social structure determines the formation and maintenance of identity in the social process. Social relations are said to modify and reshape the identities once crystallized. Objective social reality is said to produce social products which are relatively stable known as identity types.

Man is an organism and though his animality is transformed into socialization, the reality construction activity is interrupted by

his organism feature. Man is capable of using his quality of organism and sociality at the same time. For example, man can eat and at the same time he can compose a song or talk with his peers on an important issue. This is an ongoing dialectical relation between the man's animality and his habit of socialization where man can create a situation of reality and produces himself to the existing reality. Thus we can conclude that the socialization processes, men as an organism, his/her identity, help him to shape reality in the society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: On what aspect does social construction of reality put emphasis on?

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Q 2: Define Reality.

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Q 3: Name the parts into which foundation of knowledge is divided.

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Q 4: Define legitimation in terms of knowledge.

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Q 5: Define knowledge?

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14.4 LET US SUM UP

- Reality is said to be socially constructed with people's thought, actions and knowledge.

- Reality is shaped through interactions and socialization process among people.
- Foundation of knowledge is said to rest on three parts: reality of everyday life, social interactions in everyday life and language and knowledge of everyday life.
- Social order in the society is said to be produced by human activity in the process of interaction and externalizations.
- Theory of institutionalization maintains the social order which included the process of habitualization, legitimation of the institutions and roles of the individual.
- Primary socialization takes place during the initial days of childhood through which he becomes a member of the society.
- Secondary socialization takes place after an individual goes through primary socialization.
- The significant other has a role to play in primary socialization whereas secondary socialization occurs through mutual interaction.



14.5 FURTHER READING

1) Berger, Peter. and L. Thomas Lukman (1991). Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. England: Penguin Books.



14.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to Q No 1: Social construction of reality puts emphasis on the importance of knowledge.

Answer to Q No 2: Reality can be defined as phenomena having its independent character where we cannot use our volition or will.

Answer to Q No 3: Reality of everyday life, social interactions in everyday life, language and knowledge in everyday life.

Answer to Q No 4: Legitimation implies both values and knowledge which give new meanings to institutions.

Answer to Q No 5: Knowledge may be defined as the truth or certainty that phenomena which are real possess some specific characteristics.



14.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: What do you mean by social construction of reality?

Q 2: Explain the four types of legitimation.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Explain the parts of the foundations of knowledge.

Q 2: What does 'society as subjective reality' imply?

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UNIT 15: PIERRE BOURDIEU

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Social Capital

15.4 Habitus

15.5 Let Us Sum Up

15.6 Further Reading

15.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.8 Further Reading

15.9 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- understand Bourdieu's contribution to the field of sociology
- explain the notion of capital and its various utilities in the society
- discuss the concept of habitus and field.

15.2 INTRODUCTION

Pierre Bourdieu was born into a working-class family in Denguin a small village in southern France. Bourdieu's father was a small farmer turned postal worker with little formal education. Bourdieu got admitted to one of France's most prestigious universities, the Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris, where he studied philosophy under the famous Marxist thinker, Louis Althusser. After receiving his doctorate, Bourdieu took a teaching position in Algiers, Algeria in 1958. Algeria was at that time a French colony, but a war was underway between France and Algerian Independence movement supporters. During this time, Bourdieu undertook ethnographic fieldwork among the Kabyle, Algeria's largest indigenous group. Based on his fieldwork, Bourdieu published his first book, the Algerians. Later, Bourdieu used his fieldwork to write 'Outline of a Theory of Practice', one of his first and most influential theoretical statements.

Bourdieu's rising reputation as a leading social theorist landed him a position as Director of Studies at the Ecole Pratique des Hauted Etudes and later, in 1981, the Chair of Sociology at the College de France. Bourdieu was a prolific academic writer. He published more than 25 books and over 300 articles and essays over his career. He was also a leading public intellectual in France, speaking out and organising protests against what he saw as the unfair and exploitative aspect of neoliberal economic policy and globalisation. At the time of his death in 2002, Bourdieu was known as one of France's greatest scholars and one of the most influential social theorists in the world. It is hard to overestimate the influence Bourdieu has had on social theory. Bourdieu's works have been translated into over two dozen languages and many are already considered classics in disciplines across the social sciences and humanities. Not only sociologists, but also those in Anthropology, Cultural Studies and Education are required to read the works of Bordieu. Bourdieu's understanding of sociology as a 'combat sport' that critically takes on and exposes the underlying structures of social life has also had a strong impact on the academic field. In this unit we shall discuss about two very important concetps developed by Pierre Bourdieu

15.3 SOCIAL CAPITAL

In the 'Forms of Capital' Bourdieu expands the notion of capital beyond its economic conception which emphasises material exchanges, to include 'immaterial' and 'non economic' forms of capital, specifically cultural and social capital. He explains how the different types of capital can be acquired, exchanged, and converted into other forms. Because the structure and distribution of capital also represent the inherent structure of the social world, Bourdieu argues that an understanding of the multiple forms of capital will help elucidate the structure and functioning of the social world.

The term cultural capital represents the collection of non-economic forces such as family background, social class, varying investments in and commitments to education, different resources etc. which influence academic success. Bourdieu distinguishes three forms of cultural capital. The embodied state is directly linked to and incorporated within the individual

and represents what they know and can do. Embodied capital can be increased by investing time into self improvement in the form of learning. As embodied capital becomes integrated into the individual, it becomes a type of habitus and therefore cannot be transmitted instantaneously. The objectified state of cultural capital is represented by cultural goods, material objects such as books, paintings, instruments, or machines. They can be appropriated both materially with economic capital and symbolically via embodied capital. Finally, cultural capital in its institutionalised state provided academic credentials and qualifications which create a "certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to power." These academic qualifications can then be used as a rate of conversion between cultural and economic capital.

Throughout his discussion of cultural capital, Bourdieu favors a 'nurture' rather than a 'nature' argument. He states that the ability and talent of an individual is primarily determined by the time and cultural capital invested in them by their parents. Similarly, Bourdieu argues that 'the scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family' and 'the initial accumulation of cultural capital, the precondition for the fast, easy accumulation of every kind of useful cultural capital, starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital.' Based upon these assertions, it appears that cultural capital regulates and reproduces itself in a similar fashion as habitus. According to this model, families of a given cultural capital could only produce offspring with an equal amount of cultural capital. Through this Bourdieu contributed to the reproductionist model.

Bourdieu defines social capital as, "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." An individual's social capital is determined by the size or their relationship network, the sum of its cumulated resources (both cultural and economic), and how successfully the individual can set them in motion.

According to Bourdieu, social networks must be continuously maintained and fostered over time in order for them to be called upon quickly in future.

Finally, in his discussion of conversions between different types of capital, Bourdieu recognises that all types of capital can be derived from economic capital through varying efforts of transformation. Bourdieu also states that cultural and social capital are fundamentally rooted in economic capital but they can never be completely reduced to an economic form. Rather, social and cultural capital remains effective because they conceal their relationship to economic capital.

The above discussion provides a broad framework to understand Bourdieu's notion of capital and its various components other than the economic capital. Let us now understand the concept of social capital in a broad sense. In 1973 in a discussion on how professionals secure their position and that of their children, Bourdieu defined social capital as "A capital of social relationships which will provide, if necessary, useful 'supports': a capital of honourability and respectability which is often indispensible if one desires to attract clients in socially important positions, and which may serve as currency, for instance in a political career". He later refined his position in 1992 in defining social capital as the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Bourdieu suggested that in order for social capital to maintain its value, people had to work at it. He viewed the concept as an adjunct or dimension of cultural capital. His main idea was concerned with understanding of social hierarchy and inequality. Through his concepts of social, cultural and economic capital and their combinations Bourdieu tried to understand how inequality is created and reproduced. He illustrated the interplay between connections, cultural and economic capital by drawing examples from professions such as, lawyers or doctors who exploit their social capital – namely, 'a capital of social connections, honourability and respectability' to win the confidence of a clientele in high society, or even make a career in politics. By contrast, those who rely primarily on their educational qualification are, the most

vulnerable in the event of 'credential deflation', not only because they lack connections but also because their weak cultural capital reduces their knowledge about fluctuations in the market for credentials.

The existence of a network of connections is not a natural given, or even a social given, constituted once and for all by an initial act of institution, represented, in the case of the family group. It is the product of an endless effort at institutions which produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits. In other words, the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies. The reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed.

15.4 HABITUS

According to Bourdieu, power is culturally and symbolically created, and constantly relegitimised through interplay of agency and structure. The main way this happens is through what he calls 'habitus' or socialised norms or tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking. Habitus is 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determinant ways, which then guide them'. Habitus is created through a social, rather than individual processes leading to patterns that are enduring and transferrable from one context to another, but that also shift in relation to specific contexts and over time. Habitus 'is not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period. Habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that conditions our very perceptions of these. In this sense, habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence, without any conscious concentration'.

Related to this concept is the idea of 'fields', which are the various social and institutional arenas in which people express and reproduce their

dispositions, and where they compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital. A field is a network, structure or set of relationships which may be intellectual, religious, educational, cultural etc. People often experience power differently depending which field they are in at a given moment thus having influence on the habitus.

Let us broadly look at habitus as a theoretical concept as defined by Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, habitus are systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organising action of a conductor. The habitus- embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world. The habitus is a spontaneity without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history in mechanistic theories as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects 'without inertia' in rationalist theories.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Name the types of capital.

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Q 2: Name the types of cultural capital.

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Q 3: What is field?

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15.5 LET US SUM UP

- Pierre Bourdieu was born into a working-class family in Denguin a small village in southern France. Bourdieu's father was a small farmer turned postal worker with little formal education.
- Bourdieu's understanding of sociology as a "combat sport" that critically takes on and exposes the underlying structures of social life has also had a strong impact on the academic field.
- In the 'Forms of Capital' Bourdieu expands the notion of capital beyond its economic conception which emphasises material exchanges, to include "immaterial" and "non economic" forms of capital, specifically cultural and social capital.
- Capital is accumulated labour for Bourdieu.
- The term cultural capital represents the collection of non-economic forces such as family background, social class, varying investments in and commitments to education, different resources etc. which influence academic success.
- Bourdieu distinguishes three types of cultural capital – embodied state, objectified state and the institutionalised state.
- Bourdieu defines social capital as, "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition."
- Through his concepts of social, cultural and economic capital and their combinations Bourdieu tried to understand how inequality is created and reproduced.
- According to Bourdieu, power is culturally and symbolically created, and constantly relegitimised through interplay of agency and structure.

- Habitus is 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determinant ways, which then guide them'.
- 'Fields' are the various social and institutional arenas in which people express and reproduce their dispositions, and where they compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital.



15.6 FURTHER READINGS

1) Bourdieu, P. (1986). "The Forms of Capital", (ed) in J. Richardson, *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. NewYork.



15.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to QNo 1: Economic, cultural and social capital.

Ans to QNo 2: Embodied, objectified and institutionalised state.

Ans to QNo 3: 'Fields', are the various social and institutional arenas in which people express and reproduce their dispositions, and where they compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital.



15.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Define the various types of capital proposed by Bourdieu.

Q 2: Trace the different states of cultural capital.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Broadly define the characteristics of social capital and its functions in society.

Q 2: Define habitus and its function.

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