PGSO S1 01

Sociological Perspectives and Theories

SEMESTER - 1

SOCIOLOGY

PAPER - 01

BLOCK - 2

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND THEORIES

FIRST SEMESTER

BLOCK - 2

DETAILED SYLLABUS

Unit 8 :	**Emile Durkheim's Contribution to Sociological Theories** Emile Durkheim: Early Life, Sociology as Science, The Division of Labour and Forms of Solidarity, The Study of Suicide, Systems of Classification, Theory of Religion	**Pages :**	**113-130**
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BLOCK INTRODUCTION:

This is the second block of the paper titled “Sociological Perspectives and Theories” offered in the MA 1st Semester Sociology programme of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University. This block begins with Unit 8 where the important concepts and theories propounded by Emile Durkheim are explained. Unit 9 of discusses the Life and major works of Max Weber. Unit 10 explains the major theories propounded by Karl Marx. Unit 11 talks about the views and ideas forwarded by the thinkers belonging to Frankfurt School of Thought like Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Jurgen Habermas. Unit 12 discusses the key concepts given by Antonio Gramsci. Unit 13 explains the theories and concepts forwarded by Louis Althusser like Theories of State, Concept of Reproduction so on and so forth. Unit 14 talks about the theory on Social Construction of Reality propounded by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Unit 15 discusses the important concepts given by Pierre Bourdieu like Social Capital and Habitus..

In order to make the text more interesting and informative, a section called LET US KNOW has been provided in all the units. This section try to provide some additional information regarding the content of the unit. Further, in order to enable the learners to continuously check their progress regarding the content, some questions has been put at the end of various sections of a unit with the heading CHECK YOUR PROGRESS. The answers to the questions of CHECK YOUR PROGRESS section has been provided at the end of each unit. In the end of each unit few Model Question of long and short type is provided in order to provide an idea of the question ‘pattern’ to be expected in the examinations by the learners.

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

Q1: State the two types of sanctions.

_____

_____

Q2: State the two types of solidarity.

_____

_____

Q3: Mention the types of Suicide.

_____

_____

Q4: Define totemism.

_____

_____

Q5: State the different rules of Sociological Method as mentioned by Durkheim.

_____

_____



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)

Q1: Is Sociology a science?

Q2: Differentiate between the two types of solidarity.

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

Q1: Explain integration and regulation by putting light on the forms of suicide.

Q2: Describe the rules of sociological theory.

*** ***** ***

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)

Q1: Define power. Distinguish between constant-sum and variable-sum power.

Q2: Write a short note on Ascetic Protestantism.

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

Q1: Explain the theory of Authority of Max Weber. How do you relate in your society?

Q2: 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.

10.3 KARL MARX: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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. His basic ideas known as Marxism form the foundation of Socialist and Communist movements throughout the world. Karl Heinreich Marx was born in Trier, Rhenish Prussia (present day Germany), on May 5, 1818. His parents Heinrich Marx and Henriette Presburg Marx were descendants of a long line of rabbis. Later they converted to Lutheranism and Karl Marx was baptised in 1824. He attended a Lutheran elementary school but later became an atheist and materialist rejecting both the Christian and Jewish religions. Karl attended the Friedrich Wilhelm Gymnasium in Trier for five years, graduating in 1835 at the age of seventeen.

In 1835, Marx enrolled in Bonn University in Bonn, Germany, where he attended courses primarily in law. However, he was more interested in philosophy and literature than in law. He wanted to be a poet and dramatist. In his student days, he wrote a great deal of poetry, most of which is preserved, which that in his mature years he rightly recognised as imitative and unremarkable. Marx's father then took him out of Bonn and had him enter the University of Berlin, then a center of intellectual discussion. In Berlin a circle of brilliant thinkers were challenging existing institutions and ideas, including religion, philosophy, ethics and politics. Marx joined this group of radical (extreme in opinion) thinkers. He spent more than four years in Berlin, completing his studies with a doctoral degree in 1841.

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

Q1: What is dialectical materialism?

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Q2: What is alienation according to Marx?

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Q3: Define the concept of freedom as proposed by Marx.

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Q4: What is commodity according to Marx?

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Q5: Define the concept of Surplus value.

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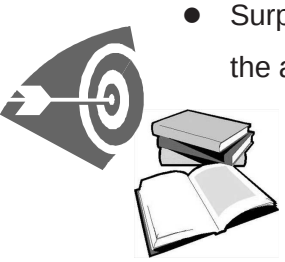
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10.8 LET US SUM UP

- 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.
2) Marx, K. and F. Engels. (1976). *The German Ideology*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Pp 33-62.
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)

Q1: State and explain the modes of production.

Q2: How is freedom related to capitalism in Marx's terms?

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

Q1: What is dialectical materialism? How is historical materialism related to it?

Q2: 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

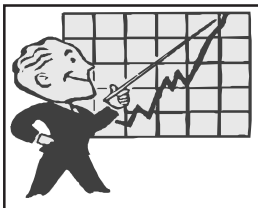
As said earlier, critical thinking has been present throughout in social sciences and has been carried forward by thinkers across generations. The Frankfurt School of thought consisted of a range of philosophers and social theorists across generations who held critical perspectives on the existing theories 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

Q1: What is meant by critical theory?

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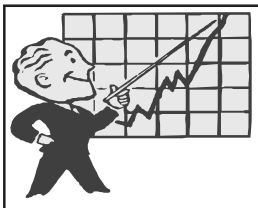
11.4 THINKERS OF FRANKFURT SCHOOL: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

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

Q2: 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.

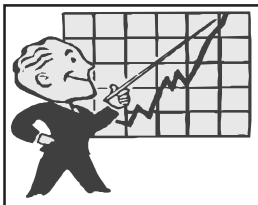
Habermas's interest in the political led him to a series of philosophical studies and critical-social analysis. His work 'Towards a Rational Society' (1970) is an attempt to apply his emerging theory

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

Q3: 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

1) Habermas, J. (1984, 1987). *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Volumes 1 and 2. Boston: Beacon Press.
2) Habermas, J. (1985). *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
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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 QNo 3: Jurgen Harbermas.



11.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

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

Q1: What was Frankfurt School? Briefly mention its primary features with reference to critical theory.

Q2: Who coined the term 'culture industry'? Briefly describe the concept.

Q3: Briefly differentiate between traditional theory and critical theory.

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

Q1: '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.

Q2: How does critical theory differ from traditional theory? Elaborate with reference to Max Horkheimer's description of critical theory.

Q3: Briefly examine Habermas's concept of public sphere and the significance of its transformation.

Q4: 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

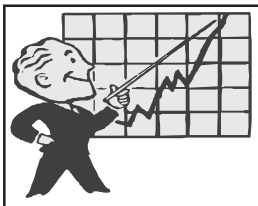
figure in academic circles of cultural studies and critical theory. The political theorists from the right and the centre have also widely appreciated his concepts, as for instance Gramsci's concept of Hegemony was widely cited. His influence is particularly strong in contemporary political science. 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

Q1: 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

Q2: 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

Q1: Name the two types of State Apparatuses.

Q2: Name three Ideological State Apparatuses.

Q3: Define ideology.

Q4: State the theses to support the definition of ideology.

Q5: What is over determination according to Althusser?



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)

Q1: Distinguish between Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatuses.

Q2: Explain relative autonomy.

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

Q1: Define ideology. State its characteristics.

Q2: 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

Q1: On what aspect does social construction of reality put emphasis on?

_____

_____

Q2: Define Reality.

_____

_____

Q3: Name the parts into which foundation of knowledge is divided.

_____

_____

Q4: Define legitimation in terms of knowledge.

_____

_____

Q5: Define knowledge?

_____

_____



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)

Q1: What do you mean by social construction of reality?

Q2: Explain the four types of legitimation.

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

Q1: Explain the parts of the foundations of knowledge.

Q2: 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

15.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.7 Further Reading

15.8 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

Q1: Name the types of capital.

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Q2: Name the types of cultural capital.

_____

_____

Q3: 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)

Q1: Define the various types of capital proposed by Bourdieu.

Q2: Trace the different states of cultural capital.

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

Q1: Broadly define the characteristics of social capital and its functions in society.

Q2: Define habitus and its function.

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