PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY

(A Central University)

DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHTS

(Paper Code: MASY1002)

M.A (Sociology)- I Year

Author:

Dr. C.N. Natarajan
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University
Tirunelveli.

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PAPER –II - SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT

UNIT - I AUGUSTE COMTE : Beginning of Sociology – Positivism – Law of Three stages – Hierarchy of Sciences – Social Statics and Social Dynamics.

UNIT II HERBERT SPENCER: The Science of Sociology – Theory of Social Evolution – Organic Analogy

UNIT III KARL MARX : Dialectical Materialism – Materialistic interpretation of History – Theory of Class and Class struggle – Surplus value Theory – Alienation Theory of Social Change..

UNIT IV MAX WEBER: Ideal Type – Causality – Social Actions – Authority, Bureaucracy, Class, Status and Power, Religion and Economy.

UNIT V EMILE DURKHEIM : Social Facts – Individual and Society – Theory of Social Solidarity – Division of Labour – Theory of Suicide – Sociology of Religion..

UNIT VI TALCOTT PARSONS: Theory of Social System – Social Action Theory Pattern Variables

UNIT VII ROBERT K.MERTON:Ethics of Science – Role – Set Theory – References – Group Theory of Anomic.

UNIT VIII ANTHONY GIDDENS: Theory of Structuration and the Constitution of Society.

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DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY
M.A.SOCIOLOGY – I Year

PAPER II – *Sociological Thought*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	TITLE	PAGE NO.
	THEORY	
	DEFINITION	1
	CHARACTERISTIC OF THEORY	4
	TYPES OF THEORIES	8
	FUNCTIONS OF THEORY	14
UNIT - I	**AUGUSTE COMTE**	21
1.1	BEGINNING OF SOCIOLOGY	23
1.2	POSITIVISM	28
1.3	LAW OF THREE STAGES	34
1.4	HIERARCHY OF SCIENCES	40
1.5	SOCIAL STATICS AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS	47
UNIT – II	**HERBERT SPENCER**	56
2.1	SCIENCE OF SOCIOLOGY	58
2.2	THEORY OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION	62
2.3	ORGANIC ANALOGY	69
UNIT – III	**CARL MARX**	
3.1	DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM	75
3.2	MATERIALISTIC INTERPRETATIN OF HISTORY	84
3.3	THEORY OF CLASS AND CLASS STRUCTURE	91
3.4	THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE	100
3.5	THEORY OF SURPLUS VALUVE	105
3.6	ALIENATION	108

UNIT – IV	**MAX WEBER**	**113**
4.1	IDEAL TYPE	**115**
4.2	CAUSALITY	**120**
4.3	SOCIAL ACTION	**127**
4.4	AUTHORITY	**132**
4.5	BUREAUCRACY	**137**
4.6	RELIGION AND ECONOMY	**143**
4.7	CLASS,STATUS AND POWER	**150**
UNIT –V	**EMILE DURKHEIM**	**156**
5.1	SOCIAL FACTS	**158**
5.2	INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY	**164**
5.3	THEORY OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY	**167**
5.4	DIVISION OF LABOUR	**171**
5.5	SUICIDE	**174**
5.6	THEORY OF RELIGION	**184**
UNIT – VI	**TALCOTT PARSONS**	**191**
6.1	THEORY OF ACTION	**194**
6.2	PATTERN VARIABLES	**201**
6.3	THOEORY OF SOCIAL SYSTEM	**208**
UNIT – VII	**ROBERT MERTON**	**225**
7.1	ETHOS OF SCIENCE	**227**
7.2	THEORY OF ROLE-SET	**233**
7.3	REFERENCE GROUP THEORY	**243**
7.4	FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS	**252**
7.5	ANOMIE	**261**
UNIT –VIII	**ANTHONY GILDENS**	
8.1	THEORY OF STRUCTURATION	
8.2	CONSTITUTION OF SOCIETY	

THEORY

DEFINITIONS

So many things happen around us. We grapple with them and seek to understand how they happen. For our understanding, sciences come to our aid with their tools, known as *theories*. Every science has built up a body of theories to explain the things occurring in their respective worlds of study.

THEORY AND PRACTICAL WORK

The term *theory* conjures up different notions in different people's minds. For some, it is an idle thinking carried out in a leisurely, casual, relaxed manner. For an administrator dealing with the day-to-day problems in the field, theory may mean simply the arm-chair mental activity of the intellectuals engaged in academic exercises. In the manner of confirming such notion about theory, in such programmes as training for social workers, *theory* is often contrasted with *practical work*. What is meant here is merely the more academic aspects of a course of instruction. For an average layman, theory may signify only some 'ideas' about something. And for many others, theory may just be a kind of philosophy.

EXPLANATORY PROPOSITIONS

However, in the domain of scientific disciplines, theory is defined as a set of propositions or statements about a phenomenon or class of phenomena. Here the term 'phenomenon' does not refer to a particular phenomenon, but a set of phenomena. As Cohen puts it, "Theories are not meant to be about particular events, but about whole categories of events". For instance, a theory is not concerned with student protest in a college or strike in a factory or drinking water riots in an area. These are all

instances of a phenomenon, namely, conflict. Theory is concerned only with conflict and not with the said instance of conflict. As the said instances have certain qualities in common, on that basis, they all may be related to the general category, that is, conflict, and sought to be understood with the aid of the theory of conflict.

Though a theory is a set of propositions, a mere set of propositions alone does not constitute a theory. As Merton points out, only when the propositions or statements dealing with a phenomenon or a class of phenomena are logically interconnected, they will constitute together a theory. It is in keeping this aspect in view that Merton defines a theory as 'a set of logically interconnected propositions'.

A phenomenon which a theory deals with is a fact in so far as it is empirically observable or its existence is verifiable by observation. A theory does not just record a fact. It provides a plausible explanation about it by means of a set of logically interconnected propositions about it. It is this aspect, that is, the explanatory aspect that raises the pertinent propositions about a phenomenon to the level of theory.

FORMULATION OF THEORY

A theory about a fact is formulated by observing its various aspects or dimensions. But it is not derived from mere empirical observation. Mere observing and couching of the observed aspects of a fact in the form of propositions is not a theory-building exercise. Theory-building is a matter of creative achievement. A theorist does not stop merely with the empirical observation of a fact. He looks beyond the observable realm of the fact and gets new insights about the fact. On the basis of such insights he obtains by transcending the observable realm of the fact, he builds a theory and provides a plausible explanation about it. Thus a theory is not restricted just to the observable aspects of a fact. It reaches out beyond itself transcending the observable realm of the fact into a higher level of abstraction. 'In this sense, it stands for the symbolic dimensions of experience, as opposed to the apprehension of brute fact' (Kaplan).

general propositions about social organisation and the development of society from which specific testable propositions can be deducted. "Others, however, are not concerned with such deductive 'scientific' theory at all. Indeed, they may deny that such an approach is valid when one is dealing with the behaviour of human beings. Instead of being about regularities in the content of human behaviour or the nature of social organisation, their general statements describe how people's social interaction proceeds".

VERIFIABLE

Thirdly, a theory is verifiable. Though it is formulated procedurally in a scientific manner, it is open to verification.

Here a basic question is raised concerning the characteristic of a theory whether it should be verified or not. This question arises mainly in such infant sciences as sociology. Some sociological thinkers equate sociological theories with the scientific laws in the mature sciences as physics and biology and assert that sociological theories are as strong and valid as the laws in such sciences. As the scientific laws are established on a solid foundation of evidence after a detailed empirical test, they are not subjected to verification. Harping on this line of argument, those who equate sociological theories with scientific laws reject verification for sociological theories. But the fact is that the state of maturity which the physical sciences have is a distant goal for the infant discipline of sociology. Moreover, since its very inception, sociology has had a large number of conflicting theories and perspectives. Sociologists, have not developed a single inductive procedure or mathematical model that could 'test' their theories and validate them so as to be applicable to all groups and societies. Sociological theories fall between the two extremes of an empirical law and purely speculative reasoning. Indeed, to some sociologists, even a simple hypothesis is a minor theory and every speculative notion can be classed as a theory if it generates at least one fruitful hypothesis that is logically sound.

Under these conditions, it is not to deny the need for any form of verification. Timasheff argues that though a theory is constructed by creative efforts, it must be subjected to verification. As it is based upon the empirical observations and generalizations, 'it may be considered and verified only in a preliminary way if no known fact or generalization seems to contradict it'. When a new fact or generalization arises, in the light of such fact or generalization, the existing theory must be verified. If there is a contradiction, the tentative theory must be rejected or at least modified.

When two or more theories give conflicting, but plausible explanations for the same social phenomenon as in the case of the rise of capitalism which is differently interpreted by Marx and Weber, the situation calls for a crucial observation as to which theory is supported by an overwhelming array of 'evidence'. The theory which comes first in the test may be pronounced more plausible. "Yet even this verification is not final, for facts may be discovered later, or generalizations drawn, which invalidate the victorious theory of today" (Timasheff).

The sociologists of today insist upon verification by qualifying the sociological theories as scientific ones. In this view, the essence of an adequate sociological theory lies not in its capacity to make 'true' statements or propositions, but in the degree to which its statements or propositions are testable. Jack Gibbs treats the untestable 'theories' as ideas and not as theories.

The verification need not be made in the fashion in which it is done in physics or in biology. Testing in the light of new facts or evidences will be adequate for verification.

PROVISIONAL

Fourthly, a theory is provisional in character. As it is subject to verification, it is always open to revision depending upon the result of verification. Upon verification, if a revision is warranted in the light of new facts or evidences, the theory has to be revised or rejected as the case may be. If, on the other hand, no revision is needed upon verification, the

theory remains valid. Even this validity is not permanent. If new facts are discovered later or generalizations drawn, it will invalidate the victorious theory of the day. As Timasheff observes, "In empiric science, theory is never final".

KEY WORDS

Deduction: Drawing specific propositions from general, abstract, logical statements.

Hypothesis: A tentative conclusion which needs verification.

Induction: Construction of general and abstract principles from specific findings.

TYPES OF THEORIES

Though theories have uniform characteristics they differ on the basis of level of abstraction and sophistication of explanation involved in their construction. On the basis of such differences, theories are classified into different types.

NORMATIVE THEORY Vs NON-NORMATIVE THEORY

George Homans identifies two types of theory: (1) normative and (2) non-normative theories.

Normative theory sets standards and prescribes forms of conduct. It prescribes how people ought to behave if they are to accomplish certain results. Strictly speaking, this kind of theory has no place in sociology, since sociology is a positive, non-normative science. It studies society as it is and not as it ought to be.

Non-normative theory, also called empirical theory, is in contrast with normative theory. It is concerned with the description or explanation of facts. It explains how the people actually behave and does not prescribe how people ought to behave as normative theory does. The distinction between the non-normative (i.e. empirical) theory and normative theory is neatly brought out by Don Martindale: "The ultimate materials of empirical theory are facts; the ultimate materials of normative theory are value imperatives". Empirical theory is formed out of facts. But normative theory converts facts into normative standards and addresses itself to a system of objectives defined by the formulator or by those in whose service he stands. In view of the empirical theory thus differing from the normative theory, it is referred to as non-normative theory.

According to Homans, there are three types of empirical or non-normative theories: (1) structural, (2) functional, and (3) psychological theories. *Structural* theory explains how elements of social behaviour are

interconnected and form a system. *Functional* theory explains how a society or social unit stands or remains in equilibrium or reaches its goals by means of certain elements or combination of elements of behaviour occurring there in. *Psychological* theory explains how a variable in the behaviour of individuals is influenced by some other variable in the same behaviour. But none of these theories occurs in its pure form in the scientific works. They are usually mixed with one another.

SUBSTANTIVE THEORY Vs FORMAL THEORY

Glaser and Strauss classify theories into two kinds, namely (1) substantive theory, and (2) formal theory. *Substantive* theory is developed for a specific substantive area of enquiry whereas *formal* theory is developed for a conceptual area of inquiry. The distinction between the two is sought to be made on the basis of the level of generality or the nature of the content of a theory. Thus, a theory about factory or hospital as a formal organization, or crime, will be a substantive theory whereas the theory formed at a higher degree of generality, such as about the production system, or medical system, or deviant behaviour would be designated as formal theory.

Both kinds of theories differ in the degree of generality. Yet they do not always remain apart. At some point, both can 'shade'.

REDUCTIONIST THEORY Vs NON-REDUCTIONIST THEORY

Theories are sometimes classified into reductionist, and non-reductionist theories. *Reductionist* theory explains a phenomenon with reference to a particular factor. It identifies and holds out a single factor to be the determinant of a social phenomenon. But, on the other hand, *non-reductionist* theory does not reduce its explanation to a single factor. It attempts to explain a phenomenon with reference to multiple factors.

SCIENTIFIC THEORY Vs EVALUATIVE THEORY

Theories are also classified into scientific, and evaluative or non-scientific theories. *Scientific* theory explains a phenomenon by collecting facts through empirical methods and relating the variables in a

logical manner. But *evaluative* theories do not make any such scientific attempt while dealing with the phenomenon in which they are interested. They adopt a philosophical or ideological approach to the phenomena with which they deal.

Francis Abraham is of the opinion that the value of attempts to classify the theories as above is highly questionable. Therefore, he differentiates between three alternate schemes of classifications using three general criteria.

SPECULATIVE THEORY Vs GROUNDED THEORY

In one scheme, theories are classified into speculative, and grounded theories. *Speculative* theory corresponds to a metaphysical theory. It is based on abstract reasoning rooted in the philosophical system. It is non-empirical and hence non-testable by empirical methods. The theories developed by the founding fathers of sociology, Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer to explain the social processes and organizations belong to this kind of theory. For evolving their theories, they synthesized the findings of a variety of disciplines, but adopted an abstract impressionist approach.

The *grounded* theory, on the other hand, is based on the findings of empirical research. It is amenable to test by the empirical methods.

Francis Abraham lists out the differences between speculative and grounded theories as follows:

(1) Speculative theories usually rely on historical method, whereas grounded theories make use of positive methods and mathematical methods to support their observations.

(2) A speculative theory corresponds to a conceptual ordering whereas grounded theory corresponds to an empirical generalization.

(3) Speculative theory gives rise to a host of assumptions, philosophical and methodological as well as theoretical ideas and conceptual schema; grounded theory generates empirical laws, principles and generalizations.

GRAND THEORY Vs MINIATURE THEORY

Another scheme of classification enumerates two types of theories, namely, grand, and miniature theories.

A *grand* theory is a broad, comprehensive conceptual scheme with a system of interrelated propositions. It is a master scheme which provides general theoretical orientations by which a number of propositions can be formulated and subjected to empirical test. It also provides a general frame of reference for the study of social processes and institutions. Talcott Parsons's general system theory and Sorokin's theory of socio-cultural dynamics are examples of grand theories.

Miniature theories are partial theories, rather than inclusive theories. They are what Merton calls 'theories of the middle-range' that lie between the minor working hypotheses evolved during the day-to-day routines of research and the all-inclusive master conceptual scheme by which all the observed uniformities of social behaviour can be understood. While the grand theory covers a wide range of aspects of a phenomenon, miniature theory deals with limited aspects of the same. The miniature theory is more specific and its frame of reference is considerably limited. Only a limited number of propositions, that too concerning specific units in the society, can be derived from such theories. It is less pretentious than the all-inclusive grand theory. Merton's reference group theory, Homans's theory of elementary social behaviour, Pareto's theory of circulation of elites and Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance are examples of miniature theory.; they fall in the category of the theories of the middle-range.

MACRO THEORY Vs MICRO THEORY

There is one more scheme of classification of theories according to which theories my be classified as macro and micro, or molar and molecular theories. *Macro* theories are broader in scope and encompass an extensive range of aspects of a unit. *Micro* theories have a narrow scope and they focus on a limited range of aspects of a unit. The early masters of social thought were almost exclusively concerned with grand, cosmic issues or

total social patterns. Theories of society, culture and institutions constitute the tradition of macro-sociology and Emile Durkheim is its major exponent. Micro-sociology is concerned with the elements of society and German thinkers like Weber and Simmel are its chief architects. Role theory and small groups theories represent the micro-tradition in contemporary sociology.

The distinction between the two types of theories is based on the size of the unit of analysis rather than the level of analysis. Macro theory, for example, studies the society as a whole; macro theory deals with the sub-systems that make up the whole, say, economy, polity, kinship or religion. Parsons's general system theory is of the macro type whereas Homans's exchange theory is of the micro type.

Macro theories are a species of grand theories and can be verified only in a preliminary fashion. Micro theories belong to the tribe of miniature theories and can be tested in a fullfledged scientific manner. This is why many scientists claim that micro theories are intrinsically more satisfactory and fruitful in the pursuit of scientific inquiry. According to them, only the discovery of the micro theory affords real scientific understanding of any type of phenomenon, because "only it gives us insight into the inner mechanisms of the phenomenon, so to speak" (Kaplan). However this view is not shared by the sociologists. In their opinion, as far as sociology is concerned, micro theories are not of much help. There are many social phenomena for which micro theories cannot provide any satisfactory explanation because of the multiplicity of variables included and the complexity of their interrelationships.

KEY WORDS

Abstract reasoning: Making conclusions or judgements about a reality without reference to any specific instance.

Evaluative theory: A theory explaining or evaluating a phenomenon in philosophical or ideological terms.

Formal theory: A theory concerning an area of higher degree of generality.

Generalization: A general statement or idea or principle.

Grand theory: A broad comprehensive theory from which a number of propositions can be formulated.

Grounded theory: A theory rooted in scientific data.

Macro theory: A theory concerning a broader range of aspects of a phenomenon.

Micro theory: A theory concerning a narrower range of aspects of a phenomenon.

Middle-range theory: A theory that lies between a minor hypothesis and an all-inclusive grand theory.

Miniature theory: A theory which is narrow in scope and covering a specific area.

Non-normative theory: A theory explaining how people actually behave. It does not prescribe how people ought to behave.

Non-reductionist theory: A theory explaining a phenomenon with reference to multiple factors.

Normative theory: A theory prescribing how people ought to behave if they are to accomplish certain results.

Positive method: Method of inquiry involving the use of observation, experimentation and other methods of the physical sciences in the study of social life.

Reductionist theory: A theory explaining a phenomenon with reference to a particular factor.

Scientific theory: A theory explaining a phenomenon with the data collected through empirical methods.

Speculative theory: A theory based on speculative thinking.

Variable: A factor that tends to vary or to produce variations in another factor.

FUNCTIONS OF THEORY

Theory, though sometimes differentiated from practical work, has a practical value. Its value is epitomized in Morris Cohen's observation about the service rendered by theory for the good of mankind: 'Purely theoretical contribution to astronomy and mathematics, by increasing the precision of navigation, saved more lives at sea than any possible improvements in the carpentry of lifeboats'.

EXPLANATION

Theory performs a host of functions. First, it provides a plausible explanation for a phenomenon about which we need clarifications. For example, in the case of formal education, there is a question in particular, warranting an answer. Why is the amount of time we spend in formal schooling so long?

There are a number of possible theoretical explanations for this question. One points to the general nature of the wider society. Industrial societies are meritocratic and impersonal. Technical skills are necessary for many jobs. As family in the industrial society is no longer a production unit and a training centre for imparting skills in the crafts, only the educational institutions have to assume the task of imparting technical skills required for the jobs in the industrial society. Children have to undergo an extensive and prolonged education so that they can equip themselves with necessary skills for a good individual performance which is the proper criterion for job placement and success.

However, there is also an alternative way of explaining the nature of modern education. According to this explanation, in the modern age, education is essentially a means of securing power and privilege. So, instead of passing on money or land, the successful families today secure the position of their children by giving them education. Because society

considers long, expensive education to be a superior qualification for holding certain positions, the parents seek after it. Above all, such education allows the parents to pass on and secure position and status for their children.

Which of these explanations is correct? Probably both. A modern society does demand real and complex skills and its schools help the children to meet that demand. At the same time educational qualifications are undoubtedly a resource in the people's continual struggle to secure a good life for themselves. With such resource, those possessing it are able to secure a good life. What is important for our purposes here is that these two accounts, each embodying different insights, also derive from two theories. The theoretical explanations may be different, yet they represent complementary ways of looking at the issue.

PROVIDING INSIGHTS

Secondly, theory provides us with insights into a phenomenon and improves our understanding of it. Prima facie there may appear to be a relationship between the two variables and such appearance may give an impression that one is the producer and the other is the product. But theory gets at a fact beyond the realm of observable reality and provides insight into it. For instance, there appears to be relationships between crime and poverty. Mere cursory observation itself can give such an impression, since the perpetrators of the crime are mostly found to be from poverty-stricken families. As the relationship itself makes out its appearance, one need not scratch one's brain to find out if crime and poverty are related.

Here a question arises concerning the relationship between poverty and crime. If money or the economic resource is the sole aim, is the crime the only avenue for earning it? Are there no avenues or possibilities for realizing that end in the condition of poverty? In this respect, Merton's theory of anomie comes to our aid to shed light on the situation. According to Merton, when the culture enjoins upon the individuals the goal of

monetary success, the society does not provide adequate institutional means or opportunities for all to realize the cultural goal. In such a situation of anomie, the individuals who could not have access to the institutional means or opportunities adapt to the condition by different modes, namely, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. Some go in for innovation, some for ritualism, and some for retreatism or rebellion. Some accept the goal, but reject the institutional means that are not accessible to them. They 'innovate' such means as theft, cheating and forgery and resort to them for achieving the goal. These means are of course proscribed by the society. Yet, they go in for them with a view to realizing the cultural goal they have accepted. Some persons abandon both the goal and institutional means. They take up begging or ascetic life and retreat from the active social life.

Thus behind the perpetration of crime, poverty does not actually lie, but anomie. Merton's theory exposes the real fact and throws light on the condition leading to crime. Theories of this kind motivate us to look beyond what we observe, to get at the real facts about a phenomenon.

FURNISHING CLARITY

Thirdly, theory gives clarity in the maze of confusion. When we confront a situation of confusion over a phenomenon, it is the theory that dispels the confusion and guides us to light of clarity. In an experiment conducted at an industrial plant at Hawthorne, U.S., some fourteen workmen were selected as the subjects. Though they had a capacity to turn out the output upto the official target, they deliberately restricted the output and saw to it that their work was below the official norm. There were inducements in the form of bonuses, piece-rate plans and propaganda, given to the workers in the company with a view to motivating them to increase production, but the workers stubbornly and consistently restricted the production. This behaviour of the workers puzzled everybody.

The solution to the puzzle came from W.I. Thomas's theory of definition of situation. According to this theory, men act in a situation according as

they define or perceive it. The workers, on the basis of their experience, believe that their tenure on the job depends upon the flow of orders, material and manufacturing. Therefore in order to have the tenure prolong, they 'stretch out' the work. They reason, whether mistakenly or not, that working rapidly and efficiently may increase income for a while, but may also mean a lay-off. Their reasoning may appear to be fallacious. But they judge a situation only by their perception and this tells them that if they restrict their pace of work or production, they can have more work; that if they work too fast, their job may be berated or abolished entirely by the introduction of a new machine.

Thus a theory comes to our relief when we find ourselves in a situation of confusion. Even if a phenomenon is complex and elusive of understanding, theory unfolds it and brings forth clarity.

FILLING UP GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE

Fourthly, theory points to gaps in our knowledge and seeks to fill them with extensional generalizations. Competition between two or more persons or groups occurs when they desire to have the same object. Mere desire to have the same object does not lead to competition. It is the physical scarcity of the object that is described as the condition producing competition. But how the scarcity arises in respect of an object is not known. It is the theory that explains scarcity in terms of the economic value. Theory makes it clear that only those objects which have economic value, but are short in supply relative to demand make themselves scarce.

PREDICTION

Fifthly, theory not only provides explanation about a phenomenon or makes up the inadequacy of the knowledge about it, but also predicts facts concerning it. Based upon intuitive knowledge, historical analysis and observation of uniformities, theory provides a secure ground for prediction. Usually expressed as tendency-statements, such theoretical predictions give power to handle the phenomenon with a sense of certainty and confidence.

GUIDING RESEARCH

Sixthly, theory guides research. It provides the conceptual tools and orientations for the research and helps it to proceed on its business.

Merton points to the ways in which theory guides and assists research. According to Merton, theories in general comprise methodology or logic of scientific procedure as an element. Such an element serves as a guideline for the research to proceed in its business.

Theories also involve broad postulates which provide frame-work for the research. Durkheim's postulate on the social causation is an example in point. Durkheim emphasizes that "the determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it". This kind of orientation provides framework for the researches aimed at searching of the causes of a phenomenon.

A theory comprises concepts. But the concepts are not kept raw. They are analysed, dressed and clarified. Such analysis and clarification of concepts enables the researchers to formulate clear and sound hypotheses or to revise the old hypotheses in the new light shed by the clarified concepts. Before the introduction of Sutherland's concept of 'white-collar crime', the hypotheses framed in the study of crime nad excluded the white-collar criminality in business and professions. But after the advent of Sutherland's conceptual clarification regarding crime, the old, spurious hypotheses were liquidated and the old data were reconstructed.

Merton adds that the post-factum explanations which the theories give for the observations and the empirical generalizations they frame about their respective subject matters, also serve as aids for research. They provide a context for the inquiry and serve as the raw materials for the formulation of hypotheses.

CONCLUSION

In sum, theory serves to improve our understanding of the phenomena we experience in our day-to-day life and to set right the gaps

or inadequacies in our knowledge. Also it serves to refine and develop the means by which we gain or update our knowledge, that is, research. In every possible way, it contributes to the development of the system of knowledge.

KEY WORDS

Anomie: A condition in which there are no adequate institutional means or opportunities for all to realize the cultural goals (Merton).

Innovation: Act of inventing and adopting new means in lieu of approved means for realizing the accepted cultural goals.

Methodology: Logic of scientific procedure of inquiry.

Post-factum explanation: Explanation about an event or action on the basis of its results.

Postulate: A proposition made without a proof.

Rebellion: Act of rejecting the approved goals and means and offering new goals and means to take the place of existing goals and means.

Retreatism: Act of abandoning both conventional goals and means for attaining them.

Ritualism: Act of abandoning the cultural goals but preserving the institutional means.

White-collar crime: Crime perpetrated by those who are in the elitist positions in the society.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The elements of a theory are

   (A) Variables

   (B) Methods of inquiry

   (C) Assumptions

   (D) Propositions

2. Normative theory is

   (A) Prescriptive

   (B) Speculative

   (C) Ideology-oriented

   (D) Ethically neutral

3. The distinction between Macro theory and micro theory depends on

   (A) Nature of reasoning

   (B) Size of the unit of analysis

   (C) Scope of inquiry

   (D) Approach

4. Define theory and describe its characteristics.
5. What are the conditions prescribed for the construction of a theory?
6. Why are the theories considered to be provisional in character?
7. Enumerate the classifications of theory.
8. State the difference between normative theory and empirical theory.
9. Describe the functions of theory.
10. State how theory aids and guides research.

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UNIT – I

AUGUSTE COMTE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

While almost all sciences had built up a strong and sound theoretical system long ago, sociology was able to have its theories make their appearance on the scientific horizon only in the 19th century. This is because only in the 19th century sociology had its birth. It was able to come into existence because of a French thinker, by name, Auguste Comte (1798-1857).

Auguste Comte was born on 19th January 1798 in the southern French city of Montpellier. His father was a devout Catholic and an ardent supporter of the royalty. An earnest, methodical and straightforward man, he was keen about order. Young Comte also had a rage for order.

At the age of sixteen, in October 1814, he enrolled in the Ecole Polytechnique, the most distinguished school in France at that time. Although he was very studious, he was disobedient and rebellious. In April 1816, along with some other students, he organized a protest against the Ecole administration for its old-fashioned, outmoded way of conducting examinations. When the management contemplated disciplinary action against Comte and his fellow rebels, Comte quit the Ecole in wrath and returned home. Since then he remained out of formal education and did not pursue the student life.

In the year 1817, at the age of nineteen, Comte came into association with the most prominent French Utopian sociologist, Count Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). He became his ardent disciple and for a while his secretary at a monthly salary of 300 Francs. They worked together for several years and brought out jointly a publication, entitled *Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for the Reorganization of Society* (1822). Soon

after the publication, they had a falling out because Comte believed that Saint-Simon was not giving him adequate credit for his contribution.

The break with Saint-Simon led to a crisis in Comte's life. First and foremost, financial difficulties engulfed him. He had no steady income. At this stage, his marriage with Caroline Massin took place. The financial crisis made his marital life unhappy and miserable. Battered by the financial hardship and friction in the marital life, he suffered a nervous breakdown and mental problems. At one stage (1827) he sought to commit suicide by throwing himself into the Seine river. But that too did not succeed.

He had estranged himself from others by picking up frequent quarrels with them. However he had a small group of admirers. They arranged for a source of income for him by organizing a programme of series of lectures on positive philosophy. Comte agreed to the lectures and the lecture notes were gradually published between 1830 and 1842, forming a voluminous master work *Course of Positive Philosophy* in six volumes. In that work, Comte was the first to use the term *Sociology*. In later years, between 1851 and 1854, he wrote a treatise entitled *System of Positive Politics* in four volumes, in which he outlined a grand plan for the reorganization of the society.

Comte died on the 5th September, 1857.

BEGINNING OF SOCIOLOGY

IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Comte lived in a period of turbulence and turmoil. The French Revolution (1789-1799) had come to an end by then. The Revolution had marked the end of the old order of things. Feudalism and serfdom had been exterminated. A new era had begun with a pervasive social awakening and upheaval. The traditional form of monarchy had been overthrown and a regime of popular sovereignty had been established. The divine right of the king and the prerogatives of the ecclesiastical heads had been thrown to the winds. The ideals of rationality, liberty and equality proclaimed by the Revolution had gained momentum and become the guiding principles of the social order. People had begun to question the old, unchallenged ideas. Their rationalist and egalitarian thinking resulted in the enactment of liberal legislation and emancipation of serfs.

Yet the Revolution had a dark side. A reign of terror had been let loose in the society. Thousands of moderates and nobles were sent to the guillotine including the king and the queen. Those who were branded the foes of Revolution were tortured and lynched in the public. Even after the Revolution was over, these acts of terrorism and violence continued plunging the society into anarchy and confusion. Those who were at the helm of affairs were inexperienced and inefficient and they were unable to control the situation and establish order. Even the sudden ascendancy of Napoleon (1769-1821) to power did not help to control the situation. It brought about some relief, but it was shortlived. The internal inter-group wars and riots continued and became the order of the day.

IMPACT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The confusion caused by the French Revolution was further confounded and aggravated by the Industrial Revolution (1760-1830) which had by that time raised its head in Europe. It had unleashed a series of

new forces and movements and paved the way for a new economic order. The intellectuals rolled out a red carpet of welcome to it. In the style of supporting and encouraging it, they developed a theory of economic liberalism or *laissez-faire* doctrine. Adam Smith (1723-1790) was the chief exponent of such doctrine and gave an all-out support for free enterprise. He and his followers vehemently opposed any form of governmental interference in industries. They advocated that only the free play of economic forces–demand and supply – should determine the wages, prices, hours of work, etc., and that the government had no business in intervening in such matters.

By that time, the regime of Napoleon had fallen and the Bourbon dynasty had come back to power. The government accepted the theory of *laissez-faire* and kept its hands off the industry. So, the workers had been thrown to the mercy of the industrialists. Thus the woes of the workers began. They were exploited and forced to work for long hours under most intolerable conditions. The capitalists and industrialists thrived and amassed wealth on the sweat and blood of the workers. The working class was in a wretched plight and had to subsist on the pittance thrown to them. They were denied the right to form unions. These conditions increased the social and political tension and unrest. These conditions created new problems and aggravated the social disorder. Lacking in both knowledge and experience the people were unable to solve these problems. They could no longer feel secure about the future that seemed destined to be bleak and hopeless. So, the need of the time was to bring about order out of turmoil and disorder, so that the people could live in peace and comfort. In keeping with that need, the intellectuals of that time started considering how order could be brought about in the society without sacrificing progress. Auguste Comte was one among them.

BIRTH OF SCIENCE OF SOCIETY

Distressed over the prevailing condition of social disorder, Comte believed that the only way for the reorganization of the society and establishment of the order was first to understand the society, its

conditions, processes and trends and then to evolve a plan for reorganization of the society on the basis of such understanding. But at that time there was no scientific discipline to provide understanding about the society. Only social philosophy was then dealing with social organization, political life, legal concepts, economic activity, ethical problems and the like. Comte criticized social philosophy on the ground that it was essentially metaphysical and non-empirical and its explanations were superficial and unsound.

SOCIAL PHYSICS

Comte thought that a better understanding of the society could be obtained only from a science. As there was no separate exclusive science to deal with the society, Comte felt the need to shape a new science for the study of society on the lines of natural sciences. He conceived of the new science in 1822 and christened it *Social physics*. He chose that name since he wanted to model the discipline after the 'hard' and ultimate science of physics. He believed that like physics, the new science would build up universal and immutable laws about the society.

There was another reason for Comte to name the new science after physics. The natural sciences then were called by such names as ending up in the suffix of 'physics'. So, he declared, "we possess now a celestial physics, a terrestrial physics, either mechanical or chemical, a vegetable physics and an animal physics: we shall want one more and last one, social physics to complete the system of knowledge of nature. I understand by social physics the science which has for its subject the study of social phenomena considered in the same spirit as astronomical, physical, chemical or physiological phenomena, that is subject to natural invariable laws, the discovery of which is the special object of investigation".

Comte maintained that with the advent of social physics, the galaxy of natural sciences would become complete. Though human society is a part of the nature, in the absence of a separate discipline to furnish knowledge about the society, the galaxy of the natural sciences remains

incomplete. The introduction of a new discipline rectifies such deficiencies and makes the galaxy complete.

Comte believed that as the nature is governed by certain invariant laws, so also, the society, a part of the nature, is governed by certain natural invariant laws. The aim of new science is to recognize and foresee those laws. Once those laws are recognized and foreseen, social action is possible to utilize them for social reorganisation. In his words, "from Science comes Prevision: from Prevision comes Action".

SOCIOLOGY

The new science soon faced a threat to its name from a Belgian statistician, Adolphe Quetelet (1796-1874). He used the term *social physics* in his publication, entitled *On Man and the Development of Human Faculties: An Essay on Social Physics* (1835), to refer to the statistical study of social phenomena. To avoid the semantic clash between his usage and Quetelet's usage of the term, Comte decided to confer a new name, *Sociology* on this new science, a combination of *socius*, a Latin word meaning "association" or "company" and *Logos*, a Greek word meaning 'science". The word was first used in Comte's *Course of Positive Philosophy*, 4th volume, published in 1839.

In 1839, Comte defined sociology as the science of human association or the study of gregarious life. In 1851, he attempted to give more flesh and blood to the said definition in his work *System of Positive Politics*. He conceived of sociology as an abstract theoretical science of social phenomena. He viewed social phenomena to be like natural phenomena. Just as natural phenomena are governed by certain laws, so also social phenomena are governed by certain laws. It is the business of sociology to discover and abstract those social laws and thereby to explain the social phenomena.

KEY WORDS

Bourbon dynasty: The ruling family of France (1589–1793; 1814–1848).

Feudalism: A system, as during the Middle Ages (about A.D. 1100 to about A.D. 1400) in Europe, under which people receive land and protection from the land-owner and work and fight for him in return.

Laissez-faire (also *laisser-faire*): Policy of freedom from government control for commercial interests.

Serfdom: A system under which persons are forced by land-owners to work on the lands.

POSITIVISM

DISCOVERY OF SOCIAL LAWS

In the view of Comte, the object of any science is to discover the laws of governing the world with which it is concerned. The natural sciences have successfully discovered and established the laws that govern the nature and have attained considerable progress in their task. Newton's law of gravity and Copernicus's discovery that it is the sun which is fixed in the universe and the earth and the other planets revolve around it are some of the examples which bear testimony to the progress in the natural sciences in discovering and establishing the laws of nature.

Comte wanted his new science to be patterned after natural sciences. He wanted that like natural sciences, sociology should also aim at discovering and establishing the laws of governing the society. He firmly believed that only upon the discovery of social laws, sociology would be able to provide a better understanding of the social phenomena.

POSITIVISM

For the discovery of the social laws and understanding of the social phenomena, he suggested adoption of positive philosophy or positivism. Positivism is the principle that knowledge can be obtained only from sensory experience. It rejects metaphysical and theological speculation, subjective or intuitive insight and purely logical analysis as the sources of knowledge. They are outside the realm of true knowledge and so the knowledge obtained through such means cannot be true knowledge. Only the sensory experience yields true knowledge. It can be verified; by using the very same source by which it is obtained, it can be verified. But the other sources like metaphysical speculation or intuition or purely logical analysis are beyond the scope of verification.

As whatever the sensory experience yields is verifiable, they all constitute facts. So the knowledge furnished by such facts is true. As the positivism thus leads to true, factual knowledge, Comte insists on its use in social science. In his view, positivism brings out facts instead of concepts. What is required for a science is facts, not mere concepts.

The scope of adoption of the principle of positivism lies only in the method of inquiry and can yield verifiable facts. So, Comte advocated that the social science must use the methods of inquiry of the natural sciences in its business of discovery of social laws. Comte believed that if only men would employ the same methods used in the study of natural phenomena, then understanding of the social phenomena would be rapidly advanced and most of the problems of the society could quickly be eliminated. Human societies could be organized on the basis of sound scientific knowledge of laws governing their operation and development.

USE OF MATHEMATICS

Comte identifies the positive method only with the methods of inquiry of natural sciences. Despite his advanced training in mathematics, he refused to identify it with mathematics and statistics. He wants his disciples also to follow suit. In his *System of Positive Politics* he points out that "the proposal to treat social science as an application of mathematics to render it positive had its origin in the physicists' prejudice that outside of mathematics there was no certainty". Comte identifies this bias with the times of pre-positive science: "This prejudice was natural at the time when everything that was positive belonged to the domain of applied mathematics and when in consequence all that this did not embrace was vague and conjectural. But since the formation of the two great positive sciences, chemistry and physiology, in which mathematical analysis plays no role, and which are recognized as not less certain than the others, such a prejudice would be absolutely inexcusable".

METHODS OF INQUIRY

The methods of inquiry used by the natural sciences are observation, experimentation and comparison.

Observation

Observation or use of the physical senses is a powerful method which can yield a wide and rich array of data. However, in Comte's view, mere observation will not be effective. It could be carried out effectively only when guided by theory. Comte states that 'but for the guidance of a preparatory theory', the observer would not know what facts to look at. Even if he observes and collects facts without the guidance of a theory, such facts can have no scientific meaning unless they are connected with some other facts by a preliminary theory.

Experimentation

Experimentation is a widely practised scientific procedure. But experimentation of a direct sort as done in natural sciences is not feasible in the study of society. Only controlled observation is one that is possible in sociology. What effects are produced by a particular variable, say for example, natural disaster, in a setting can be observed and recorded. Comte may mean only this procedure when he speaks of experiment since in the French language, *experiment* (Fr. *experience)* often connotes controlled observation.

Comparison

Comparison is a crucial method in sociology. It 'performs the great service of casting out the . . . spirit of absolutism'. Comte opines that fruitful comparison can be made between human and animal societies, between co-existing societies, and between social classes in the same society. However he holds that central to sociology is "the comparison of the different co-existing states of human society on the various part of the earth's surface", because it would help us to trace the different stages of evolution.

Historical Method

Along with the said natural science methods, Comte also introduces the historical method. He thinks that the said methods especially comparative method, can be more effective if utilized in conjunction with the historical method. By historical method, Comte does not mean what the practising historians would understand by historiography. He means the "historical comparison of states of humanity". The humanity undergoes successive transformation through the times through fixed but limited number of stages. Historical method seeks to compare those stages through which the humanity has evolved in time.

Comte considers the historical evolution to be the crux of sociology. So, he places the historical method at the core of sociological inquiry and attempts to study the social evolution by using the method in conjunction with comparative method.

QUESTION OF SEARCH OF CAUSES

Comte holds a view that only such a phenomenon that could be observed and verified can be a reality. Mind should concentrate on such a reality. As far as a phenomenon is concerned, its uniformities are a reality; they are observable but the causes of these uniformities are not subject to observation and verification. It is a mere speculation to assign causes to these uniformities. So his positivism insists on the observation of uniformities and rejects the search of causes.

POSITIVISM AS A RELIGION

Comte first introduced positivism as a method of studying society, that is, it started out as a science. But later he tried to make a religion of it. He was aiming to reorganize the society. For reorganization, he saw religion as the building force. As, during his time, religion was in the theological or metaphysical stage of belief, he thought that such religion would not be useful for the reorganization of the society. So he founded a religion of his own by extending the principle of positivism. He described his positivist religion as the religion of humanity. In that religion, there is no place for

supernatural elements. Only the humanity is adored. The religion insists on the worship of the humanity. Its motto is "Live for others". It defines selfishness as sin and service as salvation. Its main goal is to transform the society so that egoism would be subordinated to altruism and so that men would work in harmony towards social progress.

Though Comte's religion gave no place to supernatural elements, it had priesthood system. Comte declared himself to be the pontiff of the new religion. As the priests, the theologians were not selected, but the sociologists who were intoxicated with the new positivist ideas. For propagating the new religion, Comte founded an organization named 'Positivist Society' and the sociologist-priests were to be the scientific directors of the society.

Comte was of the view that the role of the priests in the new religion was to preach and propagate the basic principle of the religion, altruism, embedded in its motto "Live for others". But he thought that one could preach altruism effectively only upon having experienced affection and love which are the ingredients of altruism. He added that such experience can be obtained at the hands of women.

Comte had a soft corner for women in his heart. When his marital life was unhappy, as a source of relief, in his late forties, came a love affair with a woman, by name, Clotilde de Vaux. The love with that woman soothed and comforted his turbulent feelings. Such a refreshing experience derived from the love with that woman created in him a lofty idea about women in general. He idolized the women in the Positivist Society and gave them a prominent role. Comte had a notion that emotion is superior to intellect, feeling to mind. He perceived women to be embodiment of emotion and feeling and men as representing intellect and mind and thus he held women to be superior to men. He viewed women as representing the finer element in our nature. It is at their hands that men can experience affection and love. So, he wanted all of sociologist-priests to marry so that they

might come under the influence of women's affection and so become more altruist.

To propagate his new religion, Comte toured in the European countries and sought the popular support for it. Yet adequate support did not flow in as Comte expected. Even those few disciples who joined it quit it after some time. As the religion, thus positivism flopped miserably. However, as the scientific method, it endured and occupied a place for it in the field.

KEY WORDS

Controlled observation: Observation restricted to the effects produced by a particular variable in a setting.

Evolution: Change involving movement from a state of simplicity to a state of relative complexity. Such change is gradual, uniform and progressive.

Historical method: Method of study involving historical comparison of the states of humanity (Comte).

Intuition: Power of understanding things without conscious reasoning or study.

Metaphysics: A branch of philosophy which explains the nature and existence of things by involving abstract entities or forces like 'nature'.

Theology: Theology means study of religion. It explains the phenomena by ascribing them to spirits or supernatural beings.

LAW OF THREE STAGES

Being a true science, sociology is always in search of laws – social laws to be applied to the society by which society's past can best be understood and its future predicted. One such law discovered by Comte is the Law of Three Stages, based upon belief in social evolution.

While he was working with Saint-Simon, he turned his interest to the historical evolution of the human race. He considered that sociology is nothing if it does not have a sense of historical evolution. Study of historical evolution of the humanity is to be at the core of sociological inquiry. Prompted by the interest in the study of historical evolution, in 1822, he attempted to discover the successive stages in which human race has evolved. In his study, he began from the state of human race, not superior to that of the societies of the great apes, to the state at which he found the civilized society of Europe in his time. In his study, he applied the scientific method of historical comparison and arrived at the law of Three Stages.

EVOLUTION OF THINKING

Comte maintained that the social development or the human progress is determined by the evolution of the human mind or thinking or intellect. The evolution of the human mind takes place along with evolution of the individual mind. He says that just as each individual develops from the stage of a devout believer in God in childhood, to a critical metaphysicist (one who questions the abstract notions of existence) in adolescence, to a natural philosopher in adulthood, so also the human beings and their system of thought evolve in three stages. They are: (1) theological or fictitious, (2) metaphysical or aprioristic, and (3) positive or scientific stages. Comte relates these three stages of human development to three historical periods. The first stage was dominant till A.D. 1300. The second stage occurred from A.D. 1300 to A.D. 1800, that is, during the Middle Ages

and Renaissance period. Since A.D. 1800, the world is characterized by the third stage.

Theological Stage

At the *theological* stage the human mind supposes that all phenomena – organic and inorganic phenomena, even social phenomena – are produced by the actions of supernatural beings, or God. At that stage, man takes the spirits or gods as authors of victory and defeat, of prosperity and famine, of good health and pestilence. Thus man reasons in this fashion attributing everything to spirits or gods.

According to Comte, the theological stage goes through three phases, namely, fetishism (or animism), polytheism and monotheism. In the beginning, man believes that all objects, animate or inanimate objects, are living things. In each and every object, there is a spirit living inside. Even inanimate objects are not dead and lifeless; they have a spirit dwelling inside each. It is these spirits that are responsible for the existence and movement of the objects. Comte calls this phase *fetishism* since at this phase each object is considered a fetish, that is, a thing having a spirit dwelling inside.

As, for each object, there is a spirit, there are too many spirits. Too many spirits produce a mental confusion and thus fetishism becomes cumbersome and confusing. At one stage, to tide over this confusion, the human mind reduces the number of spirits and produces a certain number of gods. Thus *polytheism* arises replacing fetishism.

When the human mind is better organized, polytheism appears to be absurd for the mind. The multiple gods are coalesced into a single God. He is considered to be the master of the whole universe and believed to direct and control every phenomenon. He is held to be responsible for all natural events. Thus *monotheism* becomes the climax of the theological stage of thinking.

Metaphysical Stage

Monotheism is the climax of the theological stage, but the human thinking does not stop there itself. It continues to progress. In the course of progress, the reason occupies the human thinking; man ceases to think that it is the supernatural being (God) that controls and guides all phenomena. At this stage, the mind supposes that God does not stand behind everything and control it, but an abstract force produces and controls it. Such a force is not like the God which is endowed with human emotions. It is impersonal, transcendental and incomprehensible. Comte calls this stage of thinking *metaphysical* stage.

The metaphysical stage involves two phases, namely, *critical* or destructive phace and *organic* or constructive phase. In the former phase, the human mind critically examines the notion of a supreme God. Then it finds such notion as unconvincing and starts thinking of an abstract force. At this stage it constructs the notion of an abstract force as the master of the entire universe.

Positive Stage

After the theological and metaphysical thinking comes the stage known as *positive* stage. At this stage, the human mind realizes that it is futile to look for original sources or causes of phenomena because these can be neither checked against facts nor utilized to serve our needs. So, it gives up the vain search of the causes of the phenomenon and applies itself to the study of their laws, that is, the interrelationships between them and their patterned nature. For this purpose, reasoning and observation are used as the means of knowledge. The knowledge obtained by such means is rational and subject to verification. There is no place for any belief or speculation in it. In short, it does not bear the marks of the first two stages through which it passed.

Comte declares that each stage of development of human thinking necessarily grows out of the preceding one. Only when the previous stage exhausts itself does the new stage develop. Such a new stage represents

an amended and improved form of the preceding stage. Though the stages come one after another in succession, the process is not ever continuous. With the positive stage, the succession comes to an end and that stage marks the final stage in the evolution of human thinking.

EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL LIFE

Comte correlates the three stages of human thinking with the development of social organization, types of social units and also the types of social order and kinds of sentiments found in the society. He believes that social life evolves in the same way as the successive changes in human thinking take place.

During the Theological Stage

During the theological stage, the social organization has a military and monarchical set up. As, at that stage, the God is considered all in all, the society is built around him. He is held as the supreme head of the society, as King of Kings and as a mighty warrior. While the God is the mighty warrior, his representative on the earth, the king is held as the commander and the human beings are the soldiers under his authority. The entire society is thus arranged in a military organization. Naturally, in such condition, the military activity enjoys predominance and the warriors have the highest rank in the society.

Besides the warriors, the priests also have importance in the set up. As they act as the intermediaries between the God, the King of Kings and the king, the representative of the King of Kings on the earth, they also occupy a place of honour along with the warriors.

In such a military set up, as the political authority is vested in the king, there is no such entity as the State. Family is the only social unit, making up the domestic social order. Individuals depend on it for everything. It takes care of them and meets their needs. In such a situation, the attitude of the individuals towards the family is characterized by sentiment of attachment.

During the Metaphysical Stage

During the metaphysical stage, the social organization becomes legalistic. As the mind is somewhat organized during this stage, the individuals become conscious of the rights due to them. In response to the social mood, the government codifies the rights of the people and enforces them through legal machinery. As the law-making activity is the predominant activity in the legalistic set up, the legal experts assume importance in the set up.

Following the development of legalistic system, the king's authority and influence wanes and the state emerges as the basic social unit leading to collective social order. Governed by definite rules, the state becomes the supreme authority and the individuals show veneration towards it.

During the Positive Stage

During the stage of positive thinking, the scientific knowledge about the nature helps to control the natural forces and to utilize them for the production of material goods. As a result, industrial production becomes the predominant activity. With the growth of science and development of industries, the scientists and industrialists become the dominant powers in the society.

As the mind broadens during the stage of positive thinking, the scientific and industrial activities are directed towards the well-being of the humanity. As the humanity becomes the focal social unit, the social order turns out to be universal. The individual attitude towards it is characterized by benevolence. The benefit of the humanity forms the guiding consideration of the activities of the individuals.

The correlation thus worked out between the stages of intellectual development and the evolution of social life is represented by Timasheff in the following diagram:

Table 2.3.1

STAGES OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL LIFE

Intellectual phase	Social Organization	Type of social unit	Type of social order	Prevailing sentiment
Theological	Military	The family	Domestic	Attachment
Metaphysical	Legalistic	The state	Collective	Veneration
Positive	Industrial	Race (Humanity)	Universal	Benevolence

Comte describes the law of three stages as the law of human progress. Because, the law covers not only the development of human thinking and advancement of knowledge but also the development of independent societies and humanity. All these aspects collectively signify the human progress.

KEY WORDS

Fetishism: Belief that every object has a spirit dwelling inside.

Monotheism: Belief in a single God.

Polytheism: Belief in multiple Gods.

Renaissance period: Period (between A.D. 1400 and A.D. 1600), characterized by the revival and adaptation of classical style and forms of art, literature and architecture, in Europe.

HIERARCHY OF SCIENCES

Auguste Comte maintains that not only intellect or thinking but also every field of knowledge (individual science) passes through three stages of development, namely, theological, metaphysical and positive stages. But all fields of knowledge do not pass through these three stages of development at the same time. Some fields of knowledge reach the positive stage early in time, while others lag behind them. Thus they differ in the degree of development.

On the basis of this notion, Comte attempts a classification of sciences. He arranges various sciences in a hierarchical order and ranks them. At the bottom of hierarchical order, he places the sciences which have earlier reached the positive stage of development and at the top of hierarchy, the sciences which are yet to reach the positive stage.

HIERARCHY OF SCIENCES

Comte is of the view that positive method involves objective analysis. Objective analysis is possible only in the case of phenomena from which man can easily detach himself. So, the sciences that deal with such phenomena from which man can detach himself could easily make objective analysis and reach quickly the positive stage. The sciences like mathematics, astronomy, physics and chemistry have thus reached positive stage of development earlier than other sciences. The subject matters they deal with are such that one can detach oneself from them and analyse objectively. The other sciences have such subject matters from which one cannot easily detach oneself and so, for them, objective analysis is difficult. In view of this difficulty, they lag behind mathematics and other sciences in the scale of positive development.

However, even in the case of the sciences which have reached the positive stage of development ahead of other sciences, there are differences

in the rate of development. Mathematics has reached much earlier the positive stage of development, followed by astronomy, physics and chemistry in the successive order. Such rate of progress depends upon the degree of generality, simplicity and independence. In the words of Comte, "Any kind of knowledge reaches the positive stage early, in proportion to its generality, simplicity and independence of other departments". So, a science which is more general, simpler and more independent than other sciences outstrips others in reaching the positive stage of development. It is mathematics which is ahead of all other sciences in respect of these aspects and hence it has reached the positive stage of development much earlier. Next to mathematics, comes astronomy in respect of the said aspects and in reaching the positive stage of development. It is followed by physics and chemistry in both respects. Then comes biology (which Comte calls 'general physiology') and sociology in the successive order. They lag behind mathematics, astronomy, physics and chemistry in respect of the aspects of generality, simplicity and independence and in reaching the positive stage of development. Again, among them, biology comes ahead of sociology in both respects and sociology comes last.

On the basis of the degree of development, Comte arranges the sciences in a hierarchy. Considering the fact that mathematics has reached the positive stage of development much earlier than the other sciences, he places mathematics first in the hierarchy. Then he places the other sciences one after another depending upon their degree of development. Thus astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology and sociology come one after another in succession in hierarchical arrangement.

Comte constructs his scheme of hierarchy of sciences in a pyramidal form. He places mathematics at the bottom most of the pyramid. Then he places the other sciences one above the other in the following order: above mathematics, astronomy; above astronomy, physics; above physics, chemistry; above chemistry, biology; above biology, sociology. He calls a science bearing another science on its head, a 'lower' science and a science resting on the head of another science, a 'higher' science.

When a science is called a 'higher' science, it is not merely for its resting on another science, but for its depending upon others for its functioning. Likewise 'lower' science is called so, not merely for its bearing other sciences, but for its supporting and aiding them in their growth. Of the sciences, sociology is the highest science; it is most dependent. Mathematics is the lowest science; it is the most independent science.

MATHEMATICS

Comte calls mathematics the basis of the mind. He contends that with mathematics as its chief tool, human mind can go anywhere in its thinking and can investigate the natural laws. With it, the human mind can study any phenomenon. Thus in the view of Comte, mathematics is the basis for all sciences. There is no scientific inquiry in which mathematics is not used. This itself is sufficient to point out mathematics as basic to all sciences.

Mathematics is the most general, simple and abstract of all sciences. It just studies the relationship between the objects and ideas. The objects and ideas are abstract. Also they are general in the sense that they can be applied anywhere. Further they are simple; for understanding them, there is no need for seeking the aid of other sciences.

While studying the relationship between the objects and ideas, mathematics measures the relationship. It measures them very precisely. Other sciences also study and measure the relationship between phenomena. But their measurement of relationship is not so precise as mathematics'. Hence Comte calls mathematics the most precise science.

SCIENCES DEALING WITH INORGANIC PHENOMENA

Then in the hierarchy of sciences in the next place come the sciences that deal with natural phenomena. All natural phenomena are of two kinds, namely, (1) inorganic and (2) organic. Among these, the inorganic phenomena are more general; they are found in greater frequency in the universe than the organic phenomena. So, the sciences that deal with the

inorganic phenomena occupy the second place next to mathematics which is the most general science.

Science Dealing with Astronomical Phenomena

Again, the inorganic phenomena fall into two kinds, namely, (1) astronomical, and (2) terrestrial. Astronomical phenomena (stars and planets) are more general than terrestrial phenomena; they are spread more widely than the latter. Also they are more stable than the terrestrial phenomena; they appear under the conditions which do not vary very much.

So, the science that deals with the astronomical phenomena, that is, astronomy, comes ahead of the sciences that deal with the terrestrial phenomena. As its subject matter (astronomical phenomena) is more general and amenable to precise measurement, astronomy comes in the second place next to mathematics.

Science Dealing with Terrestrial Phenomena

Then comes the science that deals with terrestrial phenomena. It is terrestrial physics. Terrestrial physics includes two fields: (i) physics and (ii) chemistry. Physics deals with matter while chemistry deals with the composition of matter. Thus physics is more general than chemistry as the former deals with the masses rather than elements. Secondly, physics serves as a basis for chemistry. Chemical phenomena depend upon laws of physics. Chemical action is conditioned by the physical laws of weight, heat and electricity. But physical phenomena are not influenced by the laws of chemistry. In view of the edge physics has thus over chemistry, it comes ahead of chemistry next to astronomy in the scheme of hierarchy.

However, both physics and chemistry depend upon astronomy and mathematics. As the masses and chemical reactions of the elements are affected by the astronomical factors, both of them depend upon astronomy for the knowledge of those factors. For the accuracy of study, both of them rely upon the principles of mathematics.

SCIENCES DEALING WITH ORGANIC PHENOMENA

Like inorganic phenomena, organic phenomena include two kinds: (i) individual and (ii) group. The individual is studied by one science and group, by another.

Biology

The science that studies the individual is biology. It studies the structure and movements of individual units of life in the plant and animal worlds. The study of individual units of life requires knowledge of the forces governing them. So, biology has to depend upon other sciences. It depends upon chemistry because chemistry provides knowledge about nutrition or secretion. It is indebted to physics, because physics provides knowledge concerning the weight, temperature and related facts about the living organisms. As all forms of individual life are affected by astronomical factors, biology has to depend upon astronomy for the knowledge of astronomical factors. For accuracy of work of studying the individual life, biology needs the help of mathematics. Thus biology is dependent upon all the anterior sciences in the hierarchy.

Sociology

Lastly comes sociology. As the group is more complex than the individual, the study of the group requires the knowledge of all other sciences. So, sociology depends upon all other sciences preceding it in the hierarchy. It rests upon biological, chemical, physical and astronomical knowledge and uses mathematics as its tool in its inquiries. Comte argues that no science can be effectively studied without sufficient knowledge of the sciences on which it depends.

THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES

Thus in the hierarchy of sciences, first comes mathematics; it occupies a place at the bottom most of the hierarchy. On it rests astronomy. Then come physics, chemistry, biology and sociology in the ascending order. While mathematics has earlier reached the positive stage of development, other sciences are yet to come to the level of mathematics. Again, while

the sciences of astronomy, physics and chemistry are somewhat close to the level of mathematics, biology and sociology remain far away. Particularly for sociology the distance is too long.

Comte bases his scheme of hierarchy of sciences on the following theoretical principles:

1. Order of Development: At the bottom, the most developed science finds place and at the top, the least developed science.

2. Order of Dependence: As sciences move up, each science depends upon those below it. The science lying at the bottom does not depend on any science. It is most independent. The science lying at the top is most dependent. It depends on all those sciences which lie below it.

3. Increasing Complexity (or Decreasing Simplicity): As sciences advance, the subjects become more complex and less amenable to precise measurement and prediction.

4. Increasing Specificity (or Decreasing Generality): As sciences go up, they become increasingly specific. Thus according to the said principles, mathematics occupies the base and sociology, the apex in the hierarchy. At the level of degree of development, mathematics is the most developed and sociology, the least developed. In the order of dependence, mathematics is the most independent and sociology, the most dependent. In the case of degree of complexity, mathematics is the most simple and sociology, the most complex. As far as generality is concerned, mathematics is the most general and sociology, the most specific.

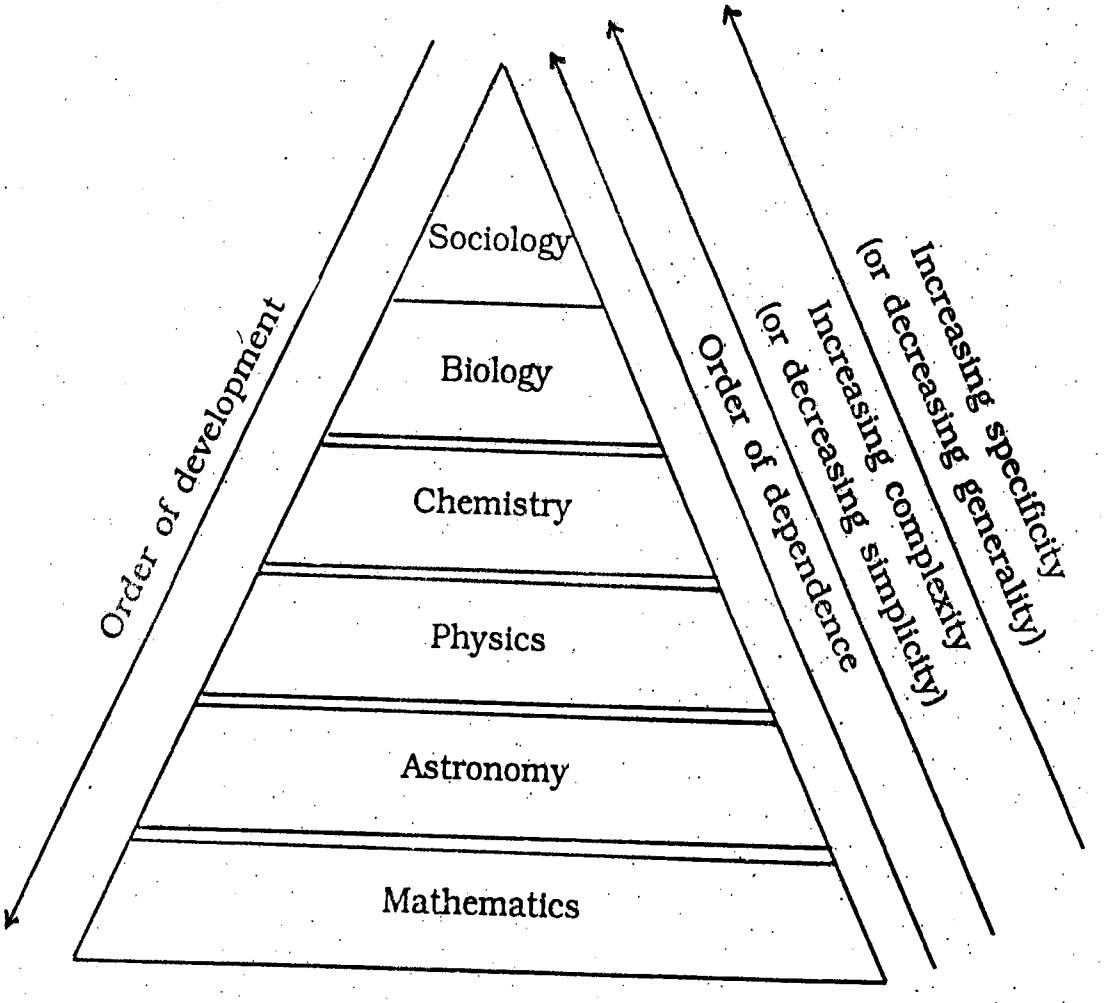
CONCLUSION

It is to be noted here that Comte has included only certain sciences and not all. The sciences like history, psychology, economics, politics and ethics are left out. Comte considers only those sciences based on reasoning and observation as true sciences. In that category, in his view, mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology and sociology fall and so, they find place in the scheme of hierarchy. In the view of Comte, history

is not a true science. The reason may be that it is not based on reasoning, but on memory. As for psychology, Comte considers it a part of general physiology, that is, biology–in fact, he calls psychology cerebral physiology. As biology has already found place in the scheme of hierarchy, psychology need not be given a separate place. Regarding economics, politics and ethics, Comte's view is that they are aspects of sociology.

Fig. 2.4.1

HIERARCHY OF SCIENCES



KEY WORDS

Hierarchy: A system of things ranked one above another.

SOCIAL STATICS AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Comte divides sociology into two major parts, namely, social statics and social dynamics. The idea of this division is borrowed from biology which is divided into two major departments, namely, anatomy and physiology. As Comte views biology and sociology as related sciences sharing certain features in common (like dealing with the organic phenomena, systematic approach and concept of primacy of entity over element), he draws upon the divisions of biology for dividing sociology.

As anatomy studies the internal structure of the organism, social statics involves the study of the structure of the society. Physiology deals with the life processes of the organism. Social dynamics studies the movement or the process of change in the society.

Statics means the state or condition of existence of a phenomenon. Dynamics refers to its movement. Social statics studies the condition of existence of the society. Social dynamics involves the study of the continuous movement or successive transformation of the society. For the study of conditions of existence of the society, social statics applies the theory of order. For the study of the continuous movement of the society, social dynamics applies the theory of progress. Thus order forms the main fact of social statics and progress forms the main fact of social dynamics.

Though order and progress fall under two different departments, both of them are closely interrelated. No real social order can be established if it is not compatible with progress and no durable progress is possible if it is not consolidated in order. Order is the basis of society and progress is the aim of society. Without basis there is no progress at all. And order has no meaning of existence without progress. Both are co-existent and complementary. One makes the other complete. We cannot study statics without dynamics and dynamics without statics.

SOCIAL STATICS

The basic fact of social order is *consensus universalis*, that is, the necessary correlation between the elements of society. In every society, there shall be a harmony between the elements, such as consensus among the sciences, between the sciences and arts, within political institutions, between civil and political society, between manners and ideas. Such a harmony, that is, consensus universalis is the very foundation of solidarity as well as the basis of the order. It shapes the collection of individuals into a collectivity, a plurality of institutions into a unity.

Here Comte uses the organic analogy; he compares (to a limited extent) the society to a living organism. In the organism, there are different organs. Yet they shape the organism into a unity by working in harmony with one another. It is because of such solidarity between the organs, the whole – organism – remains as a unity. In the similar way because of the consensus universalis between the different elements, the society remains as a unity.

The unity of the elements is facilitated by certain forces. Such forces include language, religion and division of labour.

Language

Language is a means of acquisition and accumulation of goods and knowledge. It also serves as the vehicle for the transmission of the goods and knowledge from one generation to another. Without language we cannot inherit a culture created by our ancestors, practise it and pass it on to our succeeding generations. Language serves to preserve the culture.

Above all, it serves as a medium of exchange of ideas and understanding of one another. Without mutual understanding, there is no harmony among the individuals. Thus by facilitating the exchange of ideas and promoting understanding between the people, it creates a harmony in society and unifies them.

Religion

Religion is another unifying principle. It teaches the individual to love the fellow-human beings. By teaching and cultivating in the individuals the sentiment of love, religion unifies them and makes them live together. When the people imbibe the sentiment of love, egoistic tendencies give slip paving way for the altruistic tendency. The combination of love and altruism unifies and binds the people together so as to live in harmony.

In this connection, Comte is sceptical of the role of the traditional religion built around the deistic conception and worship of divinities. He believes that the traditional religion is not suited for the purpose of promoting social harmony through the principles of love and altruism. Only the Religion of Humanity which he founded on the basis of positivist principle is best suited for the purpose. In his view, only his Religion of Humanity can deliver the goods.

Division of Labour

Apart from language and religion, division of labour also serves as a unifying principle in the society. By dividing and distributing the activities among the individuals, the system of division of labour provides a means of economic subsistence for each individual and also fosters the development of individual gifts and capacities. Yet, at the same time, it contributes to human solidarity by creating in each individual a need of dependence on others. In the system of division of labour as each individual cannot be self-reliant and self-sufficient, he has to rely on others for the gratification of his needs. As he does only a part of the activity, he has to depend upon others for the satisfaction of his needs which is possible only in the face of the totality of the activity. His dependence on others makes it necessary for him to cooperate with others and to live in harmony with them.

Role of Family and State

Comte assigns a place to family and state in the promotion of harmony and order in the society. It is within the family that the individuals

experience love and affection and learn to live in co-operation and harmony with others. Their egoistical tendencies are curbed and harnessed for social purposes. It itself functions as a prototype of unity.

Through the coordination of families, many social combinations arise, based on conscious operation. The important among them is the state. It also joins the family in promoting harmony and order. As it enjoys the power to govern, it guides or controls the society, arranges and supervises co-operation and ensures harmony and order.

Critical Phase in the Order

According to Comte, as long as there is harmony between the elements, the society finds itself in the condition of order and stability. Such a stage he calls the *organic* period of society. But at one stage, the society finds itself in a *critical* period. The social harmony is lost and the old traditions, institutions, etc. become disturbed. During that period, there will be confusion and anarchy. Such a condition will tend to be transitional lasting for a few generations. If it will last longer, then there will be a need to renovate the society completely. In such a situation, the science of sociology will come to aid in the renovation of the society and re-establishment of order.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Order can be real only when there is progress and progress can be accomplished only when there is order. Thus both order and progress are connected with and correlative to one another. So, Comte wants that sociology shall concentrate its attention not only on social order but also on progress. While social statics deals with order, the other division, social dynamics covers progress.

Intellectual Development

Comte asserts that social progress is linked to the intellectual development. With the intellectual development, society attains progress. The intellectual development passes through certain stages. When it moves

from one stage to another stage, society also moves from one stage of progress to a relatively higher stage of progress.

In his law of three stages, Comte indicates the stages through which the intellect evolves. They are (1) theological (2) metaphysical and (3) positive.

Theological Stage

At the theological stage, the human mind seeks the original sources or causes of all phenomena. It supposes all phenomena to be results of immediate actions of the supernatural beings, spirits or gods. It believes that behind each phenomenon, there is a spirit or God.

Metaphysical Stage

When the mind becomes better organised, it moves out of the theological stage and enters the metaphysical stage. At this stage also man tends to seek the causes of phenomena, but at a different level. Instead of attributing them to supernatural beings, he believes that all phenomena are governed by an abstract, transcendental force. Whether it is the health of the human body or wealth of nations, any phenomenon is the result of the action of the abstract force.

Positive Stage

As man's vision widens and his observations increase in scope and depth, the mind becomes better organized. At this stage, it gives up the search of the causes of the phenomena and turns to their patterned nature and interrelationships.

Social Progress

When the mind crosses each stage, correspondingly there is a progress in the material and moral spheres of society. During the theological stage, the society is organised in a military set-up. The military activity is the predominant activity in the society. The warriors have an upper hand in the society. The society is built around the domestic order, with the family as the basic social unit.

During the metaphysical stage, society moves from the military set-up to legalistic set-up. The military activity subsides giving place to the legislative activity. With the improvement in the thinking, people become conscious of their rights. In response to the social mood, the government codifies the rights and enforces them through machinery of law. Because of this trend, the legal experts gain importance in the society. As, in such a situation, the state becomes the chief social unit, the social order becomes collective.

At the stage of positive thinking, the human mind is capable of inquiring into the nature and controlling the natural forces. As a result, science and technology come into development. With such a development, man launches war against nature and tries to bring it under his control for production of material goods. The industrial activity flourishes and becomes the predominant activity in the society. It is directed not towards the benefit of a particular collectivity, but towards that of the entire humanity. Thus mankind becomes the focal social unit towards which attention and care are directed. As a result, the social order becomes universal where benevolence becomes the prevailing sentiment.

Others Factors in Social Progress

Thus Comte explains social progress on the basis of intellectual development. He maintains that intellectual development brings about and stimulates development in the material and moral spheres of society. However, he does not rule out other causal factors. One such factor is the growth of human population. He considers the population growth a major factor which determines the rate of social progress. The population growth brings out greater division of labour. Consequently individuals are pushed to carry out greater efforts to secure subsistence in such condition and the society is compelled to develop more powerful means to regulate situations arising from increasing differences between the individuals.

Comte mentions some more factors which determine the rate of progress. They are differential endowment of the races, and presumably,

white superiority, the role of climatic differences, with the conditions in the Mediterranean basin being the most favourable for progress, and the political action which may accelerate or retard progress. But there are no sufficient evidences for the role of these factors in human progress. Comte himself is aware of the insufficiency of evidence and keeps his conclusions tentative. He also agrees upon the role of geniuses in social progress, but believes that the geniuses are the agents of predetermined movements.

CONCLUSION

Although Comte distinguishes between social statics and social dynamics for analytical purposes, the subject matters they deal with, order and progress, are interlinked. So, the static and dynamic laws must be linked together throughout the system. Comte's distinction between statics and dynamics associated with the ideas of order and progress respectively is no longer accepted today since societies are far more complex than to be explained by simple notions of order and progress. Comte's perception was guided by the spirit of the Enlightenment period (A.D. 18th century) in which these ideas developed. Contemporary sociologists do not agree to these ideas. But his basic division of sociology continues to exist in the terms, *social structure* and *social change*.

KEY WORDS

Consensus Universalis: Complete harmony between the elements of a whole (society).

Enlightenment period: Period (A.D. 18th century) of philosophical movement, characterised by rationalism and impetus towards learning and a spirit of scepticism, in Europe.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Which science did Comte take as the model for shaping the science of society?

   (a) Mathematics

   (b) Biology

(c) Physics

(d) Chemistry

2. What are the root words of *sociology*?

(a) Socio and logy

(b) socius and logos

(c) Socius and logy

(d) Socio and logos

3. In Comte's view, what is the essential element of social order?

(a) Consensus universalis

(b) Positive thinking

(c) Altruistic tendency

(d) Scientific temper

4. State the conditions under which Auguste Comte evolved the science of sociology?

5. Describe the methods advocated by Comte for positivist study of social phenomena.

6. Discuss how Comte's law of three stages serves to understand intellectual and social evolution.

7. Explain how Comte correlates development of mind to social evolution.

8. State how different abstract sciences are placed in the hierarchy of sciences.

9. Describe the principles on which the hierarchy of sciences is based.

10. Explain Comte's propositions about social statics and social dynamics.

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UNIT - II

HERBERT SPENCER

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) is considered to be the second founding father of sociology and English father of sociology. He was born in Derby, England on 27th April 1820. As he had ill-health right from his birth, he could not go to school and receive formal education. However, he had private study under his father George Spencer who was working as a school master and mastered mathematics and natural science.

At the age of thirteen, Spencer went to his uncle's house for further studies. Under the uncle's care, he gained a firm grounding in mathematics and elementary physics. At the age of seventeen, he joined the London and Birmingham Railways as a civil engineer in the construction of a rail road. During this career, he was specialised in designing bridges and solving geometrical problems. When the construction work was completed in 1841, he was discharged from the job.

After the discharge from service, he shifted to journalism and became the subeditor of a journal called *Economist*. He wrote many articles in it. He had a strong faith in the principles of individualism and *laissez-faire*. His articles reflected his faith and were supportive of those principles. In 1850, he published his first book *Social Statics*. The book also was in support of the principles he believed in.

In 1853, his uncle died, leaving behind a sizeable fortune for Spencer. So, Spencer left the *Economist* and decided to earn his living as an independent writer. He brought out a host of books. The noteworthy among them were the *First Principles*, *Principles of Biology* (2 volumes), *Principles of Psychology* (2 volumes), *Principles of Sociology* (3 volumes), *Principles of Ethics* (2 volumes), *The Study of Sociology* and *Descriptive Sociology* (8 volumes).

His voluminous scholastic work earned him a considerable recognition. His books were accepted as text books in some universities. There was a large readership for his works in England and America. The intelligentsia in the continent recognized him as a genius. His works were translated in several languages such as French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian.

Apart from writing books, he showed interest in learning many subjects. He acquired the knowledge of geology and biology. When Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species* came out in 1859, it inspired Spencer to focus his attention on the social evolution and to develop ideas on it.

Spencer's parents were non-conformists. They did not adhere to any religious principle. Spencer imbibed such mentality from his parents and remained a non-conformist throughout his life. He showed a disregard for the church authorities. Infuriated over his attitude, the church took a retaliatory action against him and excommunicated him from the community. As a result, he was isolated. The isolation shortened his circle of contacts. All these incidents caused a greater degree of mental agony in him. His health condition deteriorated ending up in his death on 8th December 1903.

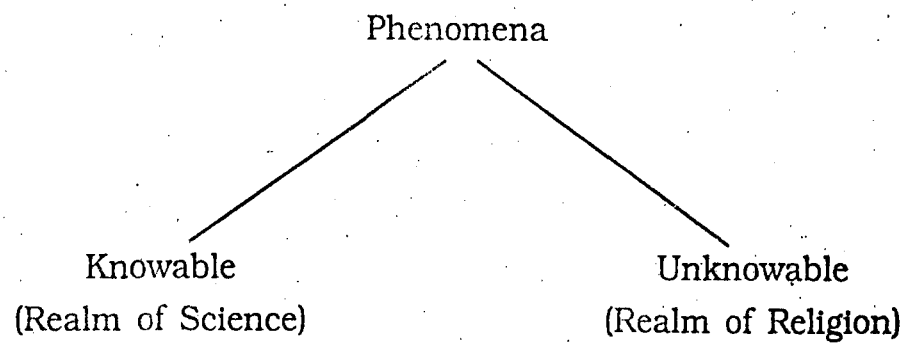
SCIENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

TYPES OF PHENOMENA

Spencer divides phenomena into two broad types: (1) the knowable and (2) the unknowable. Things knowable are the experienced facts and capable of being known and conceived by human beings. Things unknowable are things beyond the realm of human knowledge and conception. Such things as God and Soul transcend human knowledge and so they belong to the category of the unknowable. They have nothing to do with science; they are beyond and irrelevant to science. The unknowable things constitute the field of science.

Figure 3.1.1

TYPES OF PHENOMENA



BUSINESS OF SOCIOLOGY

Spencer argues that as society is a knowable phenomenon, a science of society is possible. But, as for its business, he emphasizes that the science of society must explain the present state of society. As social process is unique, the present state of society must be explained by concentrating on the initial stages of evolution and applying the laws of evolution. He hopes to explain the known present by means of unknown and conjectural past. This position he derives from the general view he holds that evolution is the supreme law of every becoming.

It is interesting to note that though Spencer wrote several treatises on sociology - *Social Statics* (1850), *The Study of Sociology* (1873) and *Principles of Sociology* (1876-1896) - and much of his *First Principles* (1862) is an introduction to sociology, he does not present a formal definition of the discipline. Occasionally he remarks that sociology is concerned exclusively with the phenomena resulting from the co-operation of citizens. He hardly intends these remarks to be a formal definition of sociology. Nor do they apply to Spencer's own voluminous sociological works. For him, it is the superorganic that constitutes the subject matter of sociology.

EVOLUTION

Spencer divides all phenomena in the universe into three categories – the *inorganic* or the matter without life, the *organic* or the living matter and the *superorganic* or combinations of living organisms into societies. Spencer believes that all these three categories of phenomena are governed by law of evolution. He states that there has been a continuity in evolution; first, evolution in the inorganic, then evolution in the organic and finally evolution in the superorganic.

According to Spencer, the evolutionary process is the prime force, motive power which explains everything, determining every becoming in all realms of being. In the case of the superorganic, evolution is clearly marked. Only the understanding of the evolutionary process occurring in it will help understand its nature. Unfortunately Spencer does not clarify how the superorganic evolution denotes a clear conception of the nature of society.

The idea of evolution dominates his mind. The new discipline shall study the superorganic only in terms of evolutionary process. This is why he calls sociology as "the study of evolution in the most complex form".

Social laws, he insists, are like all other natural laws - "sure, inflexible, ever active, and having no expectations". Law of superorganic evolution is one such law. Spencer stresses that the science of society should study such laws. His French counterpart, Auguste Comte stresses that we should aim at discovering the laws of society in order to act collectively in the

social world. But Spencer sets a different purpose for the study of laws of society. He stresses that we should study them in order that the society does not violate such laws.

Both Comte and Spencer agree upon the scientific character of sociology. However they disagree on what the function of sociology should be in society. While Comte wants sociology to guide men in building a better society in which to live, Spencer counters that sociology should demonstrate to the modern state that mankind should not interfere or tamper with the natural processes occuring within society. Spencer believes that everything in the society will be smooth as long as the state pursues a pure *laissez-fare* policy. Such a policy will serve the interests of the society best. Hence he wants the new science to refrain from interfering with the natural processes occurring within society. Evolution will automatically occur as it occurs in the other phenomena. Sociology need not take any initiative to bring about evolution in the society. As a law of nature, evolution will tend to occur in the superorganic and the state need not interfere with the process in the name of accelerating or regulating it. Sociology can drive home this point to the state.'

METHODS OF STUDY

For the methods of study to be employed by sociologists, Spencer suggests "We must learn, by inspection, the relations of co-existence and sequence in which social phenomena stand to one another". By comparing societies of different kinds and societies in different stages, we must ascertain what traits of size, structure and function, are associated with one another. In the context of this suggestion, Spencer calls upon the new science to use history's service. He says that as what concerns us to know is the natural history of society, we have to seek to use the service of practical history. By narrating the lives of nations, it functions as descriptive sociology and "furnishes materials for a Comparative Sociology; and for the subsequent determination of the ultimate laws to which social phenomena conform". According to Spencer's line of thinking, history, if done well is essentially a sociology, a careful description of social

phenomena in evolution. And so, the historian and the sociologist, working together, can assess the origins, present structure and future prognoses of social evolution, a universal process occurring in all things.

However, this principle does not guide his own procedures. As material he uses mainly illustrations from ethnology, depending on the hypothesis that primitive man shows retarded stages of evolution. By observing retarded contemporaries, he assumes, one is able to reconstruct the series of transformations which brought about the advanced society of today. The importance Spencer assigns to ethnology is manifest in the fact that the first half of the first volume of *Principles of Sociology* is entitled 'Data of Ethnology' and is almost entirely devoted to a conjectural reconstruction of the physical, emotional, intellectual and especially, religious life of primitive man.

Spencer, in fact, selects materials from most diversified cultures, widely separated in time and in space. He picks up facts here and there and brings them together in such a way as to support his evolutionary hypothesis; the materials combined in this arbitrary manner are used to confirm his hypothesis. Such a procedure, of course, is entirely out of keeping with rules of logic and principles of scientific method.

KEY WORDS

Inorganic: Having no life.

Organic: Having life.

Superorganic: Spencer refers to society as 'the superorganic'. By this term he means a combination of living organisms (men) into an entity, that is society. Such a combination, though formed by men, is superior to men.

THEORY OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION

The predominant theme of thought system of Herbert Spencer is evolution. So to say, it is the foundation of his sociological theory. Evolution is a process whereby a matter changes from a simple form to a complex form through a process of successive differentiation. This transformation, he says, is a universal phenomenon occurring in every matter – in the inorganic, organic and superorganic matters. In the words of Spencer, "the advance from the simple to the complex is seen alike in the earliest changes of the universe. . . It is seen in the geologic and climatic evolution of the Earth; it is seen in the unfolding of every single organism on its surface . . . ; it is seen in the evolution of humanity whether contemplated in the civilized individual or in the aggregate of races; it is seen in the evolution of the society . . . ; and it is seen in the evolution of all these endless concrete and abstract products of human activity."

GENERAL LAWS OF EVOLUTION

Within this framework of universal evolution, Spencer worked out general laws of evolution. These laws, which apply to all things, whether inorganic, organic or superorganic, comprise three 'basic laws' and four 'secondary propositions' - each depending upon each and all upon the doctrine of evolution.

The three 'basic laws' are:

(1) Persistence of force: Evolution is induced by some force or forces in the universe which transcend our knowledge. They are persistent and do not vanish. It is because of their permanent existence that evolution occurs for ever.

(2) Indestructibility of matter: At one stage, the existing matter is disintegrated. But such disintegration does not spell destruction. At another

stage, the matter becomes integrated and proves itself to be indestructible. In any transformation, it persists and does not wither away or vanish.

(3) Continuity of motion: When the matter changes from one form to another, the energy embodied in the matter also passes from one form to another. As long as matter persists, energy also persists.

The four secondary propositions are that:

(1) The forces inducing evolution are interrelated. This interrelationship is not temporary; it is permanent. It will persist at all times.

(2) The forces are never lost, but transformed into equivalents.

(3) In the course of evolution, every matter moves along the line of least resistance. No force resists the evolutionary process.

(4) The motion of change occurs in a rhythmic fashion.

Spencer says that these seven laws jointly produce the *law of evolution.* As per this law, every matter is subject to evolutionary change. In the beginning every matter is homogeneous or uniform. A matter which is homogeneous is inherently unstable. It cannot remain in the state because it is exposed to persistent forces which will induce changes. The forces affect homogeneous matter and cause differences in it. Under such condition, different parts come into existence in the matter and in the process, the matter loses homogeneity and becomes heterogeneous or multiform. The different parts tend to become aggregated and integrated through a clustering of like units. The multiformity does not end with this state of equilibrium. It tends to go on increasing. The final limit of this process is an ultimate equilibrium.

SOCIAL EVOLUTION

In the same fashion, like evolving aggregates in general, the superorganic matter also undergoes evolutionary change. In the beginning, the society is simple, uniform and homogeneous. It has very few parts (units) and all those parts remain unlike, structurally undifferentiated. They perform the same functions. Which part performs which function could not be discerned.

But this uniformity or homogeneity is not coherent. It occurs just because of the parts being alike. The society is not held together by any bond. Further, the organization of the society is not definite, it is vague. There are no definite norms to keep the whole intact.

Governed by the natural law of evolution, the society tends to change "from a state of relatively indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a state of relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity". As it is exposed to the persistent change inducing forces, it undergoes a change and the change occurs in the direction of evolution. In his *Principles of Sociology*, Spencer identifies the factors of evolution. They are:

1. *Original extrinsic factors:* Climate, flora, fauna and other physical environmental factors.

2. *Original intrinsic factors:* Physical, intellectual and emotional traits of humans.

3. *Secondary or derived factors:*

(i) Progressive modification of environment (organic and inorganic) by society.

(ii) Size of society - density of population.

(iii) Reciprocal influence of society and individual.

(iv) Accumulation of superorganic

(a) Material appliances.

(b) Language.

(c) Development of knowledge ending in science.

(d) Customs and laws, and institutions.

(v) Struggle between society and neighbouring society.

When exposed to the persistent forces of change, differences occur in the society. There is an increase in the parts and they are dissimilar and unlike. They are differentiated not only in structure but also in functioning. Their roles are also differentiated. In such a condition, if one part fails in

its functioning, its action cannot be assumed by other parts. In the undifferentiated state, where parts are basically alike they can easily be substituted for one another. But in a differentiated, complex state, such substitution is not possible. If one part fails in its function, its action cannot be assumed by other parts. Hence each part depends upon the others. This mutual dependence brings about the coalescence of parts which results in the coherence and integration of the whole. Stability also finds its way into the whole in such condition.

The multiformity or heterogeneity of the society tends to go on increasing till the limit of equilibrium. With the increase in the heterogeneity, the coherence and definiteness also increase.

TWO STRAINS OF THOUGHT

On the advance of social evolution, Spencer's theory contains two strains of thought, one of which is logically related to his basic concept of evolution more effectively than the other.

Simple → Compound → Doubly Compound → Trebly Compound.

The first strain of thought develops the thesis that the main fact of evolution is the *movement from simple society to various levels of compound society.* In the scheme of this evolutionary process, four types of society are identified - simple, compound, doubly compound and trebly compound. By means of the process of aggregation, these types are formed. By aggregation of some simple societies, compound societies arise; by further aggregation of compound societies, doubly compound societies arise; by aggregation of doubly compound societies, trebly compound societies arise. Each type is distinguishable on the basis of the more or less complexity of its social structure and function. A simple society consists of families; a compound society, of families united into clans; a doubly compound society, of clans unified into tribes; and a trebly compound society, of tribes organized into nation-states. With increase in size, structure increases, as well as differences in power and in the pattern of life. Simultaneously, functions are differentiated.

The diagrammatic representation of the scheme is presented below:

Table 3.2.1

CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIETIES BASED ON MOVEMENT FROM SIMPLE TO COMPLEX LEVELS

Type of society	Type of headship	Pattern of life
Simple societies	Headless	Nomadic
Compound societies	Occasional headship	Semi-settled
Doubly compound societies	Vague and unstable headship	Semi-settled or settled
Trebly compound societies	Stable headship	Settled

Military → Industrial

The second strain of thought develops the thesis that a somewhat different type of evolution also has occurred, namely, *change from military (or militant) to industrial society*. Thus in this scheme, two types of society - military and industrial societies - are identified. These two types are fundamentally unlike each other.

The military society, as the term suggests, is characterised by the military activity. For the successful military operations, unified action is necessary. But such action is not to be left to chance in the society which is constantly engaged in wars. So, the individuals are compelled to exist for the state and to co-operate with the ruling authorities. Thus they are subjected to centralised despotic government. They are bound by a strict discipline to the life of obedience under pain of representing penalties. The system of regimentation develops a rigidity in society as a result of which the individual remains in a fixed position without scope for mobility.

Since economic independence is so valuable in time of war, in order to secure the same, the society pursues a vigorous policy of economic

centralization. All economic organisations are public, controlled by the state. No private organization is allowed. Since success in the war is the supreme aim of society, bravery and strength are made the chief moral qualities towards which the ambitious individuals may aspire. A selfish patriotism that regards the victory in the wars as the chief end of the society is the dominating sentiment in the military society.

The industrial type of society is totally different from military society. But the difference is not determined by the amount of industry which is being carried on in the industrial society, as military society may also be industrial. Rather, the industrial type of society is one which combines the goal of industrial development with encouragement to absolute freedom of individual initiative in economic sphere. The government is decentralized. It pursues the policy of non-interference in the industrial activities of the individuals. Only a minimum control, that too of supportive nature, is exercised. With the relaxation of control and disappearance of regimentation, there is a voluntary co-operation from the individuals to the state. Patriotism becomes more refined and natural. The disappearance of regimentation also leads to the stratification system becoming plastic and open; the individuals are able to move from one position to another.

Spencer says that in the future, if the industrial regime becomes perfected, evolution will further advance and end up in the rise of *ethical regime*. In that regime, the development of man's ethical nature will be the major concern and aim of the society.

CONCLUSION

Though Spencer gives two types of evolutionary schemes, only the scheme pertaining to the movement of the society from simple level to various levels of compoundness dominates his theory of social evolution. His basic idea about evolution is that evolution is uniform, gradual and progressive. The above scheme fits well into this idea.

Some critics point out that the evolution does not always imply progress. They cite the frequent occurrence of devolution, a process

opposed to evolution and the movement of the multiform to the uniform, in support of their contention against the notion of progressiveness of evolution. Here Spencer himself agrees that the evolution will not be invariably progressive. It can be progressive only where the essential conditions are maintained. As long as the actions which facilitate the progress of a society towards more heterogeneity, continue in play, the evolution will be progressive. Otherwise a reverse process will take place.

KEY WORDS

Compound society: A society which is complex and heterogeneous. It comprises clans formed out of clustering of families.

Doubly compound society: A society having a greater degree of complexity and heterogeneity than a compound society. It consists of tribes formed out of aggregation of clans.

Industrial society: A society which is characterized by industrial activity which enjoys predominance over other activities.

Military society: A society characterized by military activity.

Simple society: A society which is uniform and undifferentiated. It consists of families.

Trebly compound society: A society having a greater degree of complexity and heterogeneity than a doubly compound society. It consists of nations formed out of the aggregation of tribes.

ORGANIC ANALOGY

Organic analogy, that is, identification of society with a biological organism, plays a dominant part in Spencer's thought system. When he brought out his book *Social Statics* in 1850, he presented a preview of his theory of organic analogy. In the revised edition of the book, he elaborated on the organic analogy and brought out the parallelism between organism and society.

Spencer views society as being essentially analogous to a biological organism, a human being or an animal. He justifies his view by pointing out that the society is completely organised on the same system as an individual being; the same definition of life applies to both. The transformation passed through during the growth, maturity and decay of a society conforms to the same principles as does the transformation passed through by the organism.

SIMILARITIES

More specifically, he notes several similarities between biological and social organisms.

First, both society and organism are different from inorganic matter. While in the inorganic matter there is a limited growth, in both organism and society, there is a visible growth during the greater part of their existence. A baby grows up to be a man, a tiny community becomes a metropolitan area; a small state becomes an empire.

Second, as both society and organism grow in size, their structure becomes increasingly complex. In the beginning, the organism is a unicellular creature; but with the growth in size, there is increase in the cells resulting in the differentiation of organs. At the higher level of growth, the structure of the organism becomes quite complex. Similar is the case with society. In the beginning, the structure of a society is very simple. It

consists of one or two units and they are undifferentiated and alike. When the society starts growing, there is an increase in the number of units and they are differentiated and unlike. With the increase in the number of units which are unlike and dissimilar, the society becomes increasingly complex.

Third, in both organism and society, progressive differentiation of structure is accompanied by progressive differentiation of functions. This is almost a tautological statement: if organs became dissimilar in structure, the dissimilarity extends to their functions as well. In the beginning, the undifferentiated organs perform the same functions. Which organ performs which function could not be discovered. But with the organs becoming differentiated, the function becomes dissimilar and discernible. Each organ has its own function different from that of other organs. The same is the case with the parts of society also. The parts, once become differentiated in structure, become differentiated at the level of functions also.

Fifth, though both organism and society are each a nation of parts, loss of one part does not necessarily result in the death of the whole. If an individual loses his hand, it is not necessary that this may result in his death. Similarly, in society, loss of a particular group does not necessarily mean death of the society.

Sixth, there is another similarity between organism and society. There are many systems in the organism responsible for the functioning of the organism like nervous system, circulatory system and digestive system. Similarly, there are many systems in the social organism corresponding to the organic systems of body-regulating system (government), distributing system (transport and communication) and sustaining system (industry and agriculture), etc. By carrying on their respective activities, they facilitate the efficient functioning of the society.

Thus Spencer points out the parallelism between the organism and society. Such parallelism somewhat throws a small measure of light upon the nature of society. Had he stopped his treatment of organic analogy with the above parallelism, it would have been tolerable. But the treatment

of the analogy becomes ridiculous when he stretches out parallelism to an extreme; for example, to the extreme to which he went when he compared the King's Council (in England) to the medulla oblongata, the House of Lords to the cerebellum and the House of Commons to the cerebrum.

DIFFERENCES

Even though Spencer made an organic analogy of the society, he recognized important differences between society and organism.

The *first* difference is that the parts of an organism form a concrete whole. But the parts of a society form a whole which is discrete. "While the living units comprising the one (organism) are bound together in close contact, the living units comprising the other (society) are free, are not in contact and are more or less widely dispersed". In other words, the organism is a concrete, integrated whole whereas society is a whole composed of discrete and dispersed elements.

The *second* difference is that "in the biological organism consciousness is concentrated in a small part of the aggregate (i.e. brain). In the social organism, it is diffused throughout the aggregate: all the units have the capacity for happiness and misery . . ."

And the *third* difference is that in the organism, the parts exist for the benefit of the whole. The absence of individual sensorium in the organic parts and the presence of a common sensorium for all indicates that the whole is important and supreme and that parts are subservient to them. In such a condition the welfare of the whole appears to be an end and the parts exist and function for it. But in the society, the whole exists for the benefit of the individuals. The absence of a common sensorium for the society and the presence of individual sensoriums in the parts indicates that the whole is not important and supreme. So, naturally, in such condition, the welfare of the aggregate is not an end to be sought. It is the welfare of the parts that is important. In other words, "The society exists for the benefit of its members; not its members for the benefit of society".

To cap these differences admitted by Spencer himself, the modern critics point out a significant difference between organism and society. They argue that if society is like an organism, it will experience a natural cycle of birth, maturity, old age and death. But, according to the telic concept of progress advanced by Lester Ward and developed by later writers, the death of society does not occur to society with organic inevitableness. As long as there are plans, courage and activities of the society's members, a society will not die.

Even though Spencer acknowledges the differences between organism and society, he does not discard the similarities between the two. He uses the organic analogy as the central theme of the second part of his book *Principles of Sociology*. Yet in the same breath, he denies that he holds to his doctrine. Replying to his critics, he makes such statements as the following: "I have used the analogies, but only as a scaffolding to help in building up a coherent body of sociological induction. Let us take away the scaffolding, the inductions will stand by themselves". Unfortunately, he consistently and conspicuously uses the term *social organism*. Moreover, one chapter of the *Principles of Sociology* is entitled 'Society is an Organism.'

CONCLUSION

It is to be noted here that even though organic analogy forms a central theme in Spencer's thought system, he was not the originator of organic analogy. Ancient philosophers used it and it was also often represented in German philosophy and political science, especially during the first half of the 19th century. But Spencer was the first to give to that analogy the value of scientific theory. Indeed he understood that actually society was not an organism, since there are substantial differences between the two, and yet he retained that analogical thesis. He asserted that the analogy was merely a scaffolding, but when constructing his theory, he proceeded as if the scaffolding were the real building.

Today sociology has worked its way out of the fallacies in the use of organic analogy. Present day sociology asserts that society is a *system* and

understands that an organism is also a system. The word, *system* designates everything that may be conceived as a whole, consisting of interdependent and semiautonomous parts. This is true of society and of organism to the extent that both are wholes, consisting of interdependent parts, each of which is semi-autonomus and to that extent the analogy is valid. "But it is improper", Timasheff says, "to transfer without empirical evidence any biological proposition into sociology, because organism and society alike are systems". He adds that merely on the ground of systematic similarity, society cannot be considered an organism.

KEY WORDS

House of Commons: Lower house of the British parliament.

House of Lords: Upper house of the British parliament.

Organic analogy: Identification (of society) with an organism.

System: An aggregate of interdependent and interrelated parts.

Telic concept: Concept emphasizing goal.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following aspects does Spencer emphasize as the framework of the study of society?
   (A) Structure
   (B) Function
   (C) Evolution
   (D) Progress
2. Spencer classifies society into
   (A) Agrarian and industrial societies
   (B) Military and industrial societies
   (C) Pre-industrial and industrial societies
   (D) Military and legalistic societies

3. Spencer identifies society with a(n)

   (A) Machine

   (B) Building

   (C) Scaffolding

   (D) Organism

4. Examine Spencer's views on the science of sociology.
5. Explain Spencer's theory of social evolution.
6. State the reason for Spencer giving predominance to the theme of evolution in the study of human society.
7. Describe the general laws Spencer worked out with respect to evolution.
8. Describe the two schemes of social evolution worked out by Spencer.
9. State the grounds on which Spencer identifies society with an organism.
10. Comment on Spencer's organic analogy.

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UNIT - III

CARL MARX

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

The core of Marx's thought systems is his doctrine of dialectical materialism. Lenin refers to this doctrine as the "essence" of Marxism. It is this doctrine that constitutes the foundation of Marx's social and political philosophy.

HEGEL'S IDEALISM

Marx developed his doctrine of dialectical materialism by adopting Hegel's philosophy of dialectical idealism. Hegel believed that the essence and basis of the world is human consciousness. It is separated from man. It exists outside man and is independent of him. It is the consciousness that determines man's existence. The reality of his existence is the reflexion and manifestation of his consciousness.

When the consciousness becomes mature and perfect, it becomes what Hegel calls Absolute Idea. The Absolute Idea is the spirit and the essence of the world. It is towards the Absolute Idea that the humanity is moving. But it is not formed all of a sudden. It is formed through a process of self-evolution. The self-evolution occurs through a mechanism known as dialectics. Dialectics is a process whereby a being ascends or descends. In the process of ascendance, it becomes a higher reality. To reach that stage of existence, a being passes through the following stages:

1. Thesis of Affirmation
2. Antithesis or Negation
3. Synthesis or Reconciliation of opposites

Hegel maintains that the human consciousness tends to ascend towards the stage of Absolute Idea. As such it passes through the said stages and reaches the higher stage of existence. The very consciousness reaches its stage of existence only in this dialectical manner. Initially, the human mind is in ignorance (thesis). When the state of mind becomes better organized and conscious, ignorance tends to change to non-ignorance (antithesis). Then with a definite development of knowledge, the human mind reaches the stage of science (synthesis). It is this process of development that Hegel calls dialectics. As human idea ascends to the stage of Absolute Idea in such dialectical process, Hegel's theory of evolution of consciousness is called dialectical idealism.

It is the transition from one stage to another stage, that is, from thesis to antithesis and to synthesis, that moves the belt of dialectical process. This transition does not imply a mere change over of one stage to another. It implies the elimination of contradictions existing between the two stages and ipso facto, the rise of a new stage in the context of such assimilation. According to Hegel, any stage begins by being an affirmation. It is characterised by a partial idea. Once it is entrenched, the idea, in the course of time, becomes rigid and obsolescent. Then an enlightment occurs in challenge to it. These two things - one having become obsolescent and the one representing nascence - exist together and contradict one another. More often than not, one opposite of the two tries to assert its place and the other counterpart resists it. As a result, the two opposites come into conflict with one another and this situation marks the emergence of the condition of antithesis. In this condition, the clashing opposites reconcile themselves to one another and a new idea emerges marking the rise of what is called the condition of synthesis. The new idea does not destroy the old completely. It takes from the old certain elements or aspects and integrates them into itself. Thus the new idea does not constitute an entirely new one different from the old. However, it is relatively more advanced than the old, representing a higher level of the consciousness. Even then, it is not complete, it is partial.

Once established, the synthesis becomes thesis by affirmation. As a natural law, affirmation is followed by negation and negation, by negation of the same. Thus the dialectical process will go on continuously till the Absolute Idea which is the highest form of consciousness is formed. The motive force behind the movement of the consciousness towards the Absolute Idea is the contradiction. It is the contradictions existing between two states (ideas) of consciousness and the resultant conflict between them that constitute the motor of dialectical process. But for the contradictions and conflict, there is no dialectical movement. Just as the motion of a boat is made possible by the resistance offered to the oars by the current in the river, dialectical movement is made possible by the conflict between the opposites.

MARX'S MATERIALISM

As Hegel's dialectics is idealistic, it is not acceptable to Marx. He is opposed to the very idea of giving primacy to consciousness or idea. He criticizes the Hegelian principle that consciousness determines man's existence. Marx maintains that man's existence is not determined by his consciousness. It is the other way round. It is his social existence, that is, the material conditions in which he exists that determines his consciousness". To quote Marx, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, their social existence determines their consciousness". Thus he considers the matter, that is, the conditions of marital life, as the determinant of consciousness and places it in primacy over consciousness. He contends: "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life". As Larson remarks, thus: "To Marx, matter is not a product of mind. On the contrary, mind is simply the most advanced product of matter".

Hegel maintains that the thought process (which he names idea), being an independent subject, is the demiurge (creator) of the real world, and the real world is only the outward manifestation of the idea; it only mirrors the idea. But Marx's view is that the material world and its economic conditions project into the mind and thus create idea or thought. Thus

Marx turns Hegel upside down in the matter of matter versus idea and reverses the positions of idea and matter, marking the matter the determinant of idea.

Though Marx rejects Hegel's philosophy of idealism, he takes Hegel's dialectics and combining it with materialism, develops what comes to be called the philosophy of dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialism declares that the law of reality is the law of change. The matter, being the reality, is governed by the law of change. It undergoes a constant transformation and such transformation implies not a gradual change, but a revolutionary shift.

Marx's colleague Friedrich Engels identifies three laws implied in the philosophy of dialectical materialism. They are given below:

1. The Law of Unity and Conflict of Opposites

According to this law, every phenomenon or object in the world has within itself tendencies or forces which are mutually exclusive and opposite to one another, but at the same time presuppose each other. This contradictoriness of the phenomena or objects is a general, universal feature. There is no phenomenon or object without embodying the opposites. However, the opposites are inseparably interconnected and interrelated. They co-exist in such a way that they presuppose each other. One is inconceivable without the other.

But these opposites cannot exist harmoniously for ever in a phenomenon or object; the contradictory, mutually exclusive characters of opposites inevitably causes a struggle between them. The old and the new, the obsolete and emergent must come into conflict. Here it is important to note that the unity – coexistence of opposites is a necessary condition of the conflict, because it takes place only when opposite tendencies or forces exist side by side in a phenomenon or object. The contradiction – conflict of the opposites leads to the development of the matter. Development is the result of the struggle of the opposites. Quite often one opposite or tendency of the two tries to preserve its place and to maintain the status

quo and the other counterpart tries to overthrow it and to radically change the status quo. This conflict – struggle leads to a new situation, a stage of development in the object.

Thus the movement of an object from the old form to a new form takes its source from internal contradictions. Even when the new form comes into being, at that stage also, the object has internal opposites, contradictions and conflict. Consequently there is another development, radical change.

This law stresses that the opposites can co-exist, but they can never become balanced completely. The unity is temporary and relative. Their conflict is eternal.

2. The Law of Negation of Negation

Marx says that negation is an integral part of development of reality itself. "In no sphere can one undergo a development without negating one's previous mode of experience". Here it should be kept in mind that the negation is not something introduced into an object or phenomenon from outside. It is the result of the inherent, internal contradictions of the object. The internal contradictions lead to the struggle between the opposites in the object and in the struggle, the previous mode of existence is negated and overcome by a new mode of existence. Thus the objects themselves are responsible for the negation, destruction of their existing mode of existence. They create the conditions for the destruction of their existing mode of existence and for the change into a new, higher form.

The new form – mode of existence is not formed completely anew. It is formed by the synthesis of the old and new. It takes from the negated stage - form (the old) some of its elements or aspects. Combining with them something new, it is formed as a new one. Thus in Marx's dialectical process, there is a recognition of *continuity*, the connection of the new and old in development. Here it must be borne in mind that the new never takes over the old completely as it is. It takes from the old only certain

elements or aspects. This too, it does not absorb mechanically, but assimilates and transforms them in conformity with its own nature.

In this way, the new arises in the wake of the destruction of the old in the process of development. This is only one of the stages of development, not to end, because development does not terminate here. Anything, new does not remain new for ever. It further develops. While developing, it prepares the prerequisites for the rise of something newer and more progressive. It also has internal opposites and contradictions which lead to the destruction of the existing 'old' and to the rise of something newer. This is a *negation of negation*, that is, the negation of that which itself previously overcome the old: this is a replacement of the new by something newer. The result of this second negation is also negated, overcome and so on till infinity. Development thus appears as a countless number of successive negations, as an endless replacement of overcoming of the old by the new.

3. The Law of Transition from Quantity to Quality and Vice Versa

Marx says that in the dialectical process, the change that occurs involves transition from quantity to quality and vice versa. The change that results from the struggle between the opposites in the object constitutes development. It is always from lower to higher level of reality. When a higher level is reached, there is further a movement to a further higher level.

Such a change constitutes qualitative change. There occurs disappearance of the old and appearance of the new in the process of change. In other words, two phenomena occur in the process of change: (1) Something existed, but now it does not; and (2) something did not exist, but now it does. These qualitative changes result from a number of quantitative changes. In the case of the struggle between the opposites in an object, several quantitative changes occur whereby different parts or aspects of the object become rearranged, increase or decrease (with the object retaining its identity). As the product of these quantitative changes,

qualitative changes occur. Thus the quantity changes into quality in the process of change.

This kind of change is not a one-way traffic. Quality also changes into quantity, that is, qualitative changes also lead to quantitative changes in an object. Once the new is established and entrenched, it becomes old and obsolete in the course of time. When mature conditions are present, it leads to quantitative changes.

Historical Materialism

The said laws of dialectical materialism hold good for nature, world and society alike. When these are applied to the history of society, they take the shape of historical materialism.

According to Marx, man is purely material. Consequently all his interests are material and his main concern is to secure gratification of material needs. For this, he has necessarily to produce and it is through production that he satisfies the material requirements of life. For the production, man has to develop and use forces of production. The *forces of production* include the technological know-how, tools, machinery, sources of energy, materials, labour power and a level of technology. In short, they include all the means or instruments used in the production process. The objects of labour, that is, the goods produced are also considered to be forces of production.

But mere forces alone are not involved in production process. According to Marx, "In order to produce, men enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations .. . does production take place". These relations Marx calls *relations of production*. They include work relations (i.e. relations between the direct producers or workers themselves) and *ownership relations* (i.e. relations between direct producers and their employers or those who own means of production and control the labour). But in Marx's view the production relations are essentially reflected in ownership relations.

It is these two aspects – forces of production and relations of production – that constitute a mode of production. Any historical mode of production is an integral unity between these two aspects.

Of the two aspects, the forces of production are primary. These shape the relations of production. The latter are determined by the level and character of development of productive forces. The productive forces have an intrinsic tendency to develop as the human beings' knowledge and control over nature increase. The development of forces of production leads to change in the relations of production. When the development of forces goes on, at a stage, the existing relations of production become an obstacle to the development and as a result, the two aspects come into conflict: "At a stage of development, the material forces of production come into conflict with the existing relations of production". The conflict results in the rise of new relations of production and in such a condition, the old mode is negated and overcome by a new mode of production.

The new mode also witnesses the development of forces of production and conflict between the development of the forces and existing relations of production. The conflict leads to a further change; something newer comes into being negating and replacing the new. Once more the dialectical process comes into play.

It is in this manner that the human history passes through a succession of modes of production. The contradictions between the development of forces of production and relations of production act as 'the motor of history' (Bottomore) and rotate the belt of the movement of history.

KEY WORDS

Antithesis: A condition in which there is a conflict between the old form and new form.

Dialectics: Conflict between two mutually opposite forces or tendencies.

Forces of Production: Refer to all kinds of means and objects used in production. They include technological know-how, level of technology, tools, machinery, materials, sources of energy and also labour power.

Idealism: Principle that emphasizes the importance of consciousness or idea.

Materialism: Principle that emphasizes the importance of the material conditions of existence.

Matter: Refers to the material conditions of existence.

Mode of production: System of production comprising two elements, namely, forces of production and relations of production.

Negation: A new stage which is a product of qualitative change. It involves the replacement of the old.

Negation of negation: When something that comes into existence as negation of the old, it is, in turn, replaced by something newer. It is a qualitative change.

Ownership relations: Relations between direct producers and those who own means of production and control the labour.

Qualitative Change: Disappearance of the old or appearance of the new.

Quantitative change: Changes whereby different parts or aspect of an object become rearranged, increase or decrease while the object undergoing change retains its identity.

Relations of production: Social relationships that arise directly out of the production process.

Synthesis: A condition of reconciliation of the opposites in which some aspects of the old and some aspects of the new are combined.

Work relations: Relations between the direct producers (workers).

MATERIALISTIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

PRODUCTION

History is ordinarily interpreted in terms of the deeds and saga of bravery of great men and rulers. But, for Marx, history is a process through which the evolutionary changes occur in the reality of the world. As Engels remarks, "Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history".

Marx contends that at every stage of history, the society is determined by the economic system. For Marx, the economic system refers to the system built around the activity of man in the satisfaction of his material needs. In Marx's view, man is purely material - the highest form of evolved matter. Consequently all his interests are material and his main concern is to secure gratification of material needs through economic pursuits.

Man's existence depends upon the satisfaction of material needs for which he has to look forward to the nature. He can take from it what it provides and satisfy his material needs. But the nature does not provide itself everything needed. So he controls the nature and transforms it so as to make it subservient to him. He produces the material requirements of life by exploiting the nature. For Marx, it is this act of producing the material requirements of life by controlling the nature that constitutes the very first act in human history. "This is indeed a historical act, a fundamental condition of all history".

For the production, man has to develop and use forces of production. The forces of production are basic and essential to the production process. They include technological know-how, level of technology, tools, machinery, materials, sources of energy and labour power. In short, they comprise means of production and labour power.

But mere forces alone are not involved in production process. According to Marx, "In order to produce, men enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their action on nature, does production take place". These relations Marx calls relations of production. These relations occur because of men confronting one another in production. "In production", Marx says, "men not only act on nature, but also on one another". In the effort to satisfy the needs through the exploitation of the nature and material production, men happen to confront one another. As the economic sources are scarce, society gets divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Those who corner the sources become privileged to be the owners of the same. Those who are deprived of the same in the competition become 'have-nots'. This differential distribution of ownership of the means of production (economic sources) results in the emergence of two classes – the 'propertied' and 'propertyless' classes. As the latter own nothing but labour, for their livelihood, they become labourers under the former. Thus the production relations signify the ownership relations. Marx and Engels define the ownership relations in terms of the class relations, that is, the relations between the class that is privileged to control productive forces and the class that represents the productive forces.

These two aspects - forces of production and relations of production - constitute the economic system which Marx calls *mode of production*. Marx maintains that mode of production is the base of society. All other institutions and processes in the society are built upon it. When the base changes, the superstructure also changes.

Of the two aspects, forces of production are primary. They determine the relations of production. The productive forces tend to develop as the human beings' knowledge and control over nature increases. The development of forces of production leads to change in the relations of production. When the development of forces goes on, at a stage, the existing relations of production become an obstacle to the development and as a result, the two aspects come into conflict. The conflict results in the rise

of new relations of production and in such a condition, the old mode is negated and overcome by a new mode of production.

SUCCESSIVE MODES OF PRODUCTION

In this dialectical process involving conflict between material forces of production and old relations of production, according to Marx, history has passed through four successive modes of production. They are Asiatic, ancient, feudal and capitalist modes, of which the last is the final, differentiated one.

Asiatic Mode of Production

Marx believes that before the dawn of civilization, the human society was characterized by primitive communism. He designates such stage Asiatic order. In that order, the people lived a nomadic life and earned their subsistence by food-gathering, hunting and fishing. For these activities, they used simple tools (means of production) like spear, sticks, bow and arrow, stones, etc. In this system of very low level of forces of production, the relations of production were based on common ownership of the means of production. The land was owned by the community and everybody had free access to it.

In such a situation, there was no class distinction and exploitation of man by man. It was because of two reasons. First, the tools were so simple that they could be reproduced by any one. Hence the question of monopoly of ownership of the tools by anybody or by any group did not arise. Secondly, the production was at a low level. It was just sufficient to meet the subsistence needs. Therefore it was a situation of no master and no servant. All were equal.

Ancient Mode of Production

Gradually with time, man started developing the craft of producing and surplus production began to take place. Large-scale agriculture and cattle-breeding came into development. Man perfected the existing tools and replaced the stones and wooden tools with metallic ones. The development of this type of forces of production changed the relations of

production. A situation of private property emerged, replacing the primitive equality by social inequality. Agricultural lands, pastures, mining sites and means of production became the private property. Slaves were acquired to have labour power in production. Slave owners had ownership right over the slaves and the products of slaves' labour. The slave was left only with the bare minimum necessities of life to keep him from dying of starvation. Thus the history of the exploitation of man by man began in this period.

The development of productive forces went on, but the slave relations of production (i.e. slaves) erected an obstacle to the expansion of production. Production demanded constant improvement of implements and higher labour productivity, but the slave showed no interest in it as it would in no way improve his position. With the passage of time, a tension arose between the classes of slaves and slave owners and it was manifested in slave revolts. These revolts, together with the expeditions from neigbouring tribes, undermined the foundation of slavery.

Feudal Mode of Production

Slowly agriculture became the dominant and principal economic pursuit. It was expanded on a large scale. Big estates were created. New, inanimate sources of energy such as water and wind came into use, besides human labour. Serfs (agricultural slaves) were employed by the estate owners (called lords) for labour power.

The development of the forces of production led to the emergence of feudal relations of production. The relations were based on the feudal lords' ownership of the serfs. The lords enjoyed ownership right over the labour of the serfs and the products of their labour. Thus the production relations were the relations of dominance and subjection, exploitation of serfs by the lords.

In the feudal system, side by side with agriculture, crafts also advanced. In the wake of such development, two classes emerged in the sphere of craft production. One was the class of craftsmen called *journeymen*. The other was the class of masters called *guildmasters*. The

masters owned the craft materials and tools and employed the journeymen to work on them! Since there was an increasing demand for consumption caused by population increase and discovery of new markets through colonialism, there was a need for large-scale manufacture. In response to this need, the level of technology advanced and supplies of materials increased resulting in growth of manufacture. This development of forces of production demanded adequate free labour whereas most of the working men were serfs and tied to the land. Thus the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the development of the productive forces. The peasants who were for new relations, revolted against the old relations represented by the lords. The revolts changed the relations of production culminating into a change in the mode of production from feudalism to capitalism.

Capitalist Mode of Production

The capitalist system is characterized by large-scale machine production. Huge factories, plants and mines have taken the place of artisan workshops and manufacture. New technological inventions and powerful modes of production are created and as a result, there is a tremendous growth of production and wealth. But the relations of production, that is, both the relations of ownership and distribution of income are not improved at the same rate. Despite the mass production and increase in wealth, majority of population suffers from poverty and misery. On the other hand, a few families enjoy affluence and luxury by amassing wealth. This stark and wide disparity is due to the unequal, exploitative relations of production.

In the capitalist system, the means of production are held in private ownership. A minority of the population are privileged to own and control the means of production. The rest - a vast majority - are dispossessed and go propertyless. Possessing no means of production, they are compelled by economic necessity to sell their labour power to the capitalists who own the means of production and become labourers under them. Legally, the workers - producers are free. The are free in the sense that they are not

attached to anybody or any particular factory. They can go to work for any capitalist, but they are not free from the capitalist class as a whole. Once they choose to work under capitalists, they come under the yoke of exploitation by the capitalist-employers. Under the condition of exploitation, they cannot enjoy the fruits of the mass production and increase in wealth. They are doomed to suffer in poverty and misery. While the mass production and increase in wealth are the outcome of the labour of the workers, the fruits of their labour are taken away by the non-producers who enjoy the status of the owners of the means of production. The workers are denied any share in their products.

This contradiction creates a revolutionary crisis. The workers become conscious of their class interests and organize themselves into a working class movement for eliminating the exploitation. The movement intensifies its struggle against the capitalists. The struggle begins with the bargaining for better wages and working conditions and culminates in an armed struggle which is aimed at overthrowing the capitalist system.

Marx maintains that the capitalist system symbolizes the most acute form of inequality, exploitation and class antagonism. This paves the way for class struggle and revolution which would overthrow capitalism and establish a new mode of production – which Marx calls *socialist* mode – in its place. In that new, socialist system, the means of production will become communal property. There will be no classes, no exploitation, no class conflict. The dialectical principle that has so far governed the historical process would cease to operate since then.

When the socialist system reaches its full development, it turns out to be what Marx calls *communism*. That is the last stage in the movement of history. In that stage, there will be no state, no private property, no classes, no exploitation, no class conflict – in short, no vestige of capitalism. It will be a perfect society. There every one can express his human potential adequately. So, he will work according to his ability and get according to his needs.

CONCLUSION

Some critics comment that Marx's ideas about the emergence of classless, antagonism-free society at one stage of history are Utopian ideas. However, Marx's theory occupies a significant place in the theoretical system of sociology. As Timasheff observes, it represents an important attempt to achieve a systematic theory of social structure and change.

KEY WORDS

Class relations: Relations between the class that is privileged to control the forces of production and the class that represents the productive forces, i.e. workers.

Colonialism: Tendency of acquiring countries or areas from other countries, establishing them as colonies and keeping them dependent.

Economic system: Refers to the system built around the activity of man in the satisfaction of material needs.

Guildmasters: Masters of the associations of the people engaged in crafts. These masters owned the materials and tools of the crafts and workers were employed to work on them. Such a class of people existed in the Middle Ages.

Journeymen: Craftsmen who were employed by guildmasters to work on the craft materials and tools.

Lords: (In the Middle Ages) masters of the estates of land.

Mode of production: A system comprising the relationship between the forces of production and relations of production.

Serfs: Persons who were forced into agricultural work on the lands owned by the lords (in the feudal system).

THEORY OF CLASS AND CLASS STRUGGLE

UNIVERSALITY OF CLASS

Marx characterizes the human history as the history of class struggles; "The history of all hitherto existing history is the history of class struggle". He says that except in the period of primitive communism, in all other periods of history, society has classes and class struggles. So long as there is equitable and just distribution of material wealth, there is no class distinction.

During the period of primitive communism, the economic resources belonged to the community; they were controlled by the community. So there was no class distinction. When man left the stage of primitive communism, the distribution became unequal and class distinction made its appearance. Thus in all periods of history, there exists a difference in distribution and "Society divides itself into classes, the privileged and dispossessed". In the ancient time, there were free men and slaves, patricians and plebeians; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords and serfs, guildmasters and journeymen. The modern era has class differentiation - *bourgeoisie* and *proletariat* - based on private capitalist ownership.

DETERMINANT OF CLASS POSITION

Marx holds the economic factor to be the key factor in determining class differentiation. Classes are formed and differentiated with reference to the ownership of means of material production. Those who own the means of production constitute one class and those who own no means of production form a different class. Thus, with reference to the ownership of means of production, two classes - namely, the propertied class and the propertyless class - are formed. It is these two classes that exist through ages in the human history, though the designations may be different.

Thus, according to Marx, a person's class position is determined by his relation to the means of production. His occupation or income has nothing to do with it. A person may be a carpenter by occupation. It is only depending on whether he owns a shop or works for wages, that his class placement is determined. If he owns a shop, he becomes a member of the propertied class (bourgeoisie). If he works for wages, he becomes a member of the propertyless class (proletariat).

CLASS IN ITSELF

Thus, Marx, considers the relation of the individuals to the means of material production as the key factor in determining a class. People who share the same relationship to the means of production comprise a class. Those who own them form another class. However, for Marx, this relation to the means of production is not sufficient to determine the class, as in his view, it is not sufficient for a class to be merely a class in itself, but it should also be a 'class for itself'.

CLASS FOR ITSELF

When the people comprise a class by having the same relation to the means of production, it is only in such objective condition, they constitute a class. At that stage, they constitute merely a 'class in itself '. But they will constitute a real class – 'class for itself ' only when they constitute a class in subjective consciousness, that is, when they share similar consciousness that they all belong to the same class. The small peasants form a vast mass and live in identical conditions. They share the same relationships to land. But they are not conscious of the fact that they live under the economic conditions that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of other classes. Hence they do not constitute a class.

Thus, in Marx's view though same relation to the means of production is a necessary condition for people to constitute a class, it is insufficient. For them, to constitute a class, there must be a feeling of separation from other social classes. Even here, Marx emphasizes that the feeling of

separation must be accompanied by a feeling of hostility towards other social classes. 'Separate individuals form a class only to the extent that they must carry on a struggle against another class' (Raymond Aron).

CLASSES IN THE CAPITALIST SOCIETY

All the features which Marx associates with class are found especially in the modern capitalist system. Though classes are formed in different stages of history, Marx recognizes only the classes of the modern capitalist society. The reason is that only in the capitalist society, class lines are clearly drawn. With reference to the means of material production, the society is neatly divided into two classes - the propertied bourgeoisie and the propertyless proletariat. It is around these two classes that the motor that turns the belt of history revolves.

By taking the means of production in their exclusive possession, the capitalists become the propertied class. The rest – the masses are dispossessed of the means of production. The latter own nothing but labour. It is the only marketable asset they have. Owning no other asset, for economic necessity, they sell it and become the workers under the owners of means of production which provide increasingly the means of employment for the free labourers. The relations between the owners of means of production and those who have nothing but labour, under such conditions, crystallize into two classes, namely, the capitalists (whom Marx calls the bourgeoisie) and the workers (whom Marx calls the proletariat).

The dichotomous classification of the whole population into two classes of bourgeoisie and proletariat is only an abstract model used by Marx in his analysis of modern capitalist society. He does not discount the empirical reality and possibility for intermediate classes (groups) - artisans, *petite bourgeoisie* or small businessmen, merchants, peasant land owners. But with the development of the capitalist regime, when the capitalists expand their economic 'empire', these groups will be deprived of the property or squeezed out of their business and drawn into the ranks of the proletariat. This process Marx calls *Proletarianization.*

Marx is emphatic that in the final stage of capitalism, there will virtually be only two classes in the society - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. However, of the two classes, only the proletariat remains a solid class. They alone possess the potential for organizing themselves into a class. The conditions of work and inaccessibility to the means of production facilitate the emergence of solidarity and prevent competitiveness. When a large majority of the population are reduced to the level of wage labour and the capitalistic exploitation of the labour becomes intense, the working class becomes conscious of their common interests and predicament and gets united. Also they get stimulated by an appropriate system of ideas that enables them to confront the bourgeoisie oppressors.

On the other hand, there is no similar potentiality for the bourgeoisie to get united. The competition in the market and the competitive mode of production that characterize the capitalist system keep the bourgeoisie divided. Though they may come together in political and ideological sectors, they can never transcend their self-interests in the economic sphere. On this account, even though the capitalists are divided among themselves by economic competition, they could evolve an ideology and a political system of domination that could subserve their interests. The political power and ideology can substitute class consciousness and unite the bourgeoisie. But the bourgeoisie are inevitably to face their extinction because they are sure to become the victims of the competitiveness that is inherent in the capitalist system.

EXPLOITATION OF LABOUR

Having control over the forces of production including the labour process, the bourgeoisie could easily exploit the proletariat. The sole aim of the bourgeoisie is to obtain maximum profit in the business. As Stalin writes, "the fundamental law of capitalism is maximum profit". One who is bent on making maximum profit in one's business can realize the goal by raising the prices of the products. But, as the capitalist economy comprises highly competitive business, the bourgeoisie cannot burn their fingers in their business by raising the prices unilaterally. Unless all agree

to raise the prices, such a step will not become successful. The easiest way for the bourgeoisie is then to exploit the workers on whom they have economic power. So they resort to naked exploitation of labour.

Any commodity produced by a worker is solely the outcome of his labour. It is just the labour objectified. So, its value is proportional to the quantity of the average human labour engaged in it. So, the wages payable to the worker in compensation for the labour power he has rendered must be equal to the amount of human labour. But the wages paid to the worker fall below the amount of the human labour rented. In other words, the wages fall below the value of the commodity. The capitalist exploits the worker by expropriating half of the value of the human labour and pays only for the remaining value of labour.

Further, the capitalist expropriates the surplus value of the labour of the workers. "The labour time necessary for the worker to produce a value equal to the one he receives in the form of wages is less than the actual duration of his work". Let us say that a worker produces in five hours a value equal to the one contained in his wage, but he works ten hours. Thus he works half of his time for himself and the other half for the employer. This surplus value of the work done over and above the necessary labour time is expropriated by the bourgeoisie. When the worker continues to work, the 'capital which, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, lives the more by sucking more labour'.

By successfully using their economic wealth and standing, the capitalists manoeuver to make the legal (courts) and political system (parliament) subservient to them. This political power enables them to exploit the workers without any hindrance. As the legal and political systems are subservient to the capitalists, they carry on the exploitation of the workers without any challenge.

In their incessant drive for greater and greater profits, the capitalists tend to drive wages down to a minimal level - the bare level required for the workers' subsistence. This they do since the wages are their biggest

single recurring cost. When the slumps occur and become protracted, the capitalists discover that despite cutting wage costs, the rate of profits tends to fall. Thereupon they try to cut wages even further to compensate the fall in the rate of profits. Even if booms occur, in those times, the still large number of the unemployed checks the rise in the level of wages even though the capitalists' demand for labour increases. In this manner, the workers are made into paupers, that is, they are 'pauperized'. While they languish in poverty, the capitalists enjoy leisure and luxury resting on the backs of the workers.

The capitalists do not rest contented with the exploitation of the workers for the furtherance of their goal of maximum profit. In their greed to accumulate profit, the bourgeoisie expand their economic activities and create more factories. This act necessitates the employment of thousands of workers and leads to their concentration in the factories. As a result, the workers are able to work together, communicate with one another and share their feelings and ideas.

As the capitalists also tend to monopolize the trade and market, in the process of creation of monopoly by the capitalists, the small businessmen and merchants are squeezed out of the market without withstanding the challenge of the cut-throat competition from the capitalists. The disappearance of those groups from the world of business and competition enables the capitalists to corner the market and to exercise complete control over the supply of the products and over the employment of the labour force. Thus they establish their domination over the trade and market. By virtue of this monopolistic control, they become 'homogeneous'.

Forced out of the market, the small businessmen and merchants are reduced to the level of the proletariat. Independent, self-employed people of all kinds–crafters, small peasants, master craftsmen and skilled artisans – also join them and come to the level of the proletariat. These people are left stranded without land, usable skills or marketable cheap goods as

industrialization transforms the economy. With the absorption of these people, the ranks of the proletariat swell.

All these developments lead to crystallization of social relations which ultimately result in polarization of the entire population into two mutually hostile classes; the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. With the monopolistic control of trade and market, the capitalists become 'homogeneous'. By virtue of dependence on the capitalists' factories for work and subsistence, the masses of the proletariat become homogeneous. This homogenization of the two classes sharpens the polarization process.

WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

Due to the exploitation, the proletariat become conscious of class interests and organize themselves into a working class movement. In the beginning, the individuals may be aware that they are being exploited. But because of such awareness, they do not necessarily feel to be, even to act, as a class. At this stage, they are in Marx's classic phrase, a "class in itself". They may also be trade-union conscious. By forming unions among themselves, they may fight for improvements in wages and working conditions. But in doing these things, they confine their interests only to their particular trade, shop, factory or industry. They do not associate and collaborate with other workers to form 'working class' organization even for common ends.

Gradually they develop a consciousness that all the workers belong to the same class with common interests and turn hostile against capitalists. In other words, they evolve as 'class for itself '. Only in the event of passing through such development, the working class organize themselves into a movement and intensify their struggle against the bourgeoisie class. The struggle is aimed at the forceable overthrow of the bourgeoisie class, since "their ends can be attained" only by such step and "the proletarians have nothing to loose, but chains". To accomplish the aim, the working class resorts to violence and carries on an armed struggle. As the capitalists are much smaller in size and do not have class solidarity on account of their

internal competition, they are not able to withstand the attack by the proletariat. With the overriding numerical strength and class solidarity, the proletariat easily throw out the bourgeoisie in this struggle. "The death knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated".

The outcome of the class struggle is revolution. The expropriation of the masses by the capitalists is replaced by "the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of people". The proletarians overthrow the capitalism and private property and establish control over the means of production and take over political power. This is the state of 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. This state of Dictatorship of the Proletariat is, however, a transitional phase. Ultimately classless and stateless society will emerge.

KEY WORDS

Bourgeoisie: Refers to capitalists who own and control the means of material production including the labour process.

Class: A tangible collectivity of people. It is positioned in relation to the ownership or non-ownership of means of material production.

Class for itself: A tangible collectivity that exists as a class in subjective consciousness, that is, by sharing a similar consciousness that they all belong to the same class and that they are separate from other classes.

Class in itself: A tangible collectivity that exists as a class only in objective condition, that is, only by having the same relation to the means of material production.

Homogenization: Process whereby a class becomes alike in respect of its interests and activities.

Patricians: Members of aristocracy in ancient Rome.

Pauperization: Process whereby the workers are driven to increasing poverty level (by the capitalist).

Petite bourgeoisie: Refers to those who are bourgeoisie-like in interests and behaviour. Marx applies the term to small businessmen.

Plebeians: Members of low class in ancient Rome. The common people were called so.

Polarization: Process whereby the small, petty 'classes' merge into the existing two major antagonistic classes and the population thus gets neatly divided into two mutually opposite classes.

Primitive communism: Refers to the stage in which the economic resources belonged to the community in the pre-historic time.

Proletarian (Proletariat): Refers to workers. Marx applies the term to the factory workers.

Proletarianization: Process whereby the non-workers are reduced to the level of workers.

THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Marx views human society as inherently mutable. It always tends to change and the change involves a transition from one level to another level which is relatively higher than the previous one. The change is produced largely by internal contradictions or conflict.

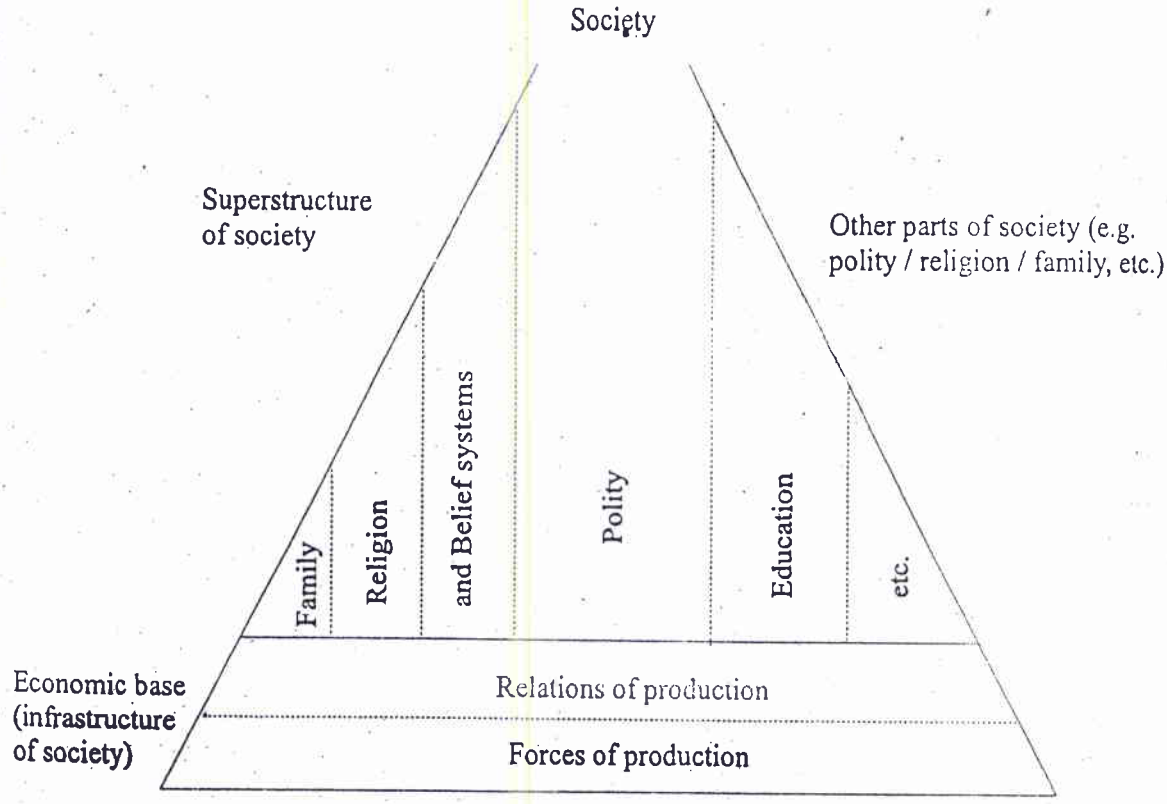
According to Marx, every society has two tiers of structure, namely, *infrastructure* (or *substructure)* and *superstructure*. In Marx's view, the economic system is the base of the society. Every society is built upon its economic system or system of production. It is this system that constitutes the base of infrastructure of the society. All the institutions and processes of the society are built upon the base and they form the superstructure. The legal, educational, political and domestic (family) institutions as well as values, mode of life, ways of thinking, religion, ideologies and philosophies figure within the superstructure.

As the infrastructure thus constitutes the base of the superstructure, any change in the infrastructure inevitably leads to change in the superstructure. The transformation of the society thus stems from the change in the economic base. The change in the economic base, on the other hand, stems from the contradictions and conflicts between its internal elements.

According to Marx, man is purely material. Consequently all his interests are material and his main concern is to secure the gratification of material needs. For this, he has necessarily to produce and it is through the production that he satisfies the material requirements of life. For the production man has to develop and use forces of production. The forces of production are basic and essential to the production process. They include the technological know-how, tools, machinery, materials, sources of energy, labour power and a level of technology. In short, they include

labour power and means of production. For Marx, the means of production are not different or separate from the labour power; they are the manifestations of the labour's productive capacity.

MARX'S MODEL OF SOCIETY



But mere forces alone are not involved in production process. According to Marx, "In order to produce, men enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations . . does production take place". These relations Marx calls relations of production. These relations occur because of men confronting one another in production. "In production" Marx says, "men not only act on nature, but also on one another". In the effort to satisfy the needs through the exploitation of the nature and material production, men

happen to confront one another. As the economic sources are scarce, society gets divided into 'haves' and 'have – nots'. Those who corner the sources become privileged to become the owners of the same. Those who are deprived of the same in the competition become have-nots. This differential distribution of ownership of the means of production (economic sources) results in the emergence of two classes – the 'propertied' and 'propertyless' classes. As the latter own nothing but labour, for their livelihood, they sell their labour to the former and become labourers. Thus the production relations signify the ownership relations. Marx and Engels define the ownership relations in terms of class relations, that is, the relations between the class that is privileged to control the productive forces and the class that represents the productive forces.

These two aspects – forces of production and relations of production – constitute the system of production. Of the two aspects, forces of production are primary. They determine the relations of production. The productive forces tend to develop as the human beings' knowledge and control over nature increases. The development of the forces of production necessitates a change in the relations of production. But the class that gets attached to the existing, old relations of production resists the development of forces and tries to fetter it. Thus, "at a stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production". But the development of forces cannot be contained by the old relations of production. In the conflict, the development of forces emerges victorious and the old relations of production are replaced by the new relations of production. That is, the class that is attached to old relations of production is overthrown by the class that stands for new relations. A new system of production supplants the older one, ushering in a new historical stage having a new social and political organisation.

Thus Marx relates social change to the change in the system of production which is produced by the dialectical interplay between the forces of production and relations of production. At every historical stage, due to the internal contradiction, that is, conflict between the forces of production

and relations of production, the system of production changes. Consequent upon the change in the system of production, the social organization which is built upon it also changes.

Thus at different stages of history, different systems of production come into being as a result of the dialectical interplay between the internal aspects of elements, forces of production and relations of production. When one system is replaced by a new system in the dialectical process, after some time, the new system is also replaced by a system which is relatively newer. Thus in this way, the human history has passed through four successive systems of production, namely, the Asiatic system, ancient system, feudal system and capitalist system. Conflict is the driving force behind the succession of these systems and the consequent social change.

Marx says that the change that results from the dialectical interplay of internal elements of economic system at each historical stage marks a revolutionary shift. Because in the process of change, the old, obsolescent economic order is toppled and replaced by a relatively new, nascent economic order. The new order means a new social and political organization.

But Marx strikes a note of caution that the process of replacement of one economic order by another new economic order will occur only so long as the mechanism of conflict exists. So far the mechanism has operated in the ancient order and feudal order and is operating in the contemporary capitalist order. Marx views capitalism as the final stage in the human history, having a room for the conflict between the development of productive forces and productive relations. Unlike in the previous stages, there is a tremendous development of the forces of production in the capitalist system. The bourgeoisie are developing more and more powerful means of production and producing more and more. But the relations of production, that is, both the relations of ownership and distribution of income are not improved at the same rate. Despite the mass production

and increase in wealth, majority of the population suffers from poverty and misery.

On the other hand, a few families - owners of means of production enjoy affluence and luxury by amassing wealth. This stark and wide disparity is due to unequal, exploitative relations of production whereby the owners of the means of production exploit the workers by resting on their backs and denying a due share in what they produce.

This contradiction creates a revolutionary crisis. The proletariat which constitutes the vast majority of the population becomes conscious of its class interests and organizes a movement to seize power from the capitalists and to transform the social relations.

Marx predicts that the working class movement will emerge triumphant in its struggle against the capitalists and at the end of the struggle, overthrow the bourgeois system and establish a new communal order – which Marx calls socialist system – in its place. In that new socialist system there will be no private capitalist ownership, no classes, no exploitation, no class conflict. In short, there will be no room for the conflict between the development of forces of production and relations of production in the new system.

CONCLUSION

Timasheff lauds Marx's theory of social change as a significant contribution to the understanding of social change. "It stands as the first and perhaps the most fruitful theory emphasizing a single, determining factor in social change".

KEY WORDS

Infrastructure (or *Substructure)*: According to Marx, the economic system is the foundation or base of society, in other words, infrastructure. Infrastructure includes mode of production and hence forces of production and relations of production.

Superstructure: All social, political and cultural institutions and processes, excepting economic institutions, constitute the superstructure of society.

THEORY OF SURPLUS VALUE

Marx claims that in every system of production, there have been classes, exploitation of labour and class conflict. However his focus falls mainly on capitalism which, in his view, represents a specimen for class system and exploitation of labour. Capitalism furnishes a classic example for how a class system would be organized in the event of the unequal distribution of material wealth and how the ruling class would exploit the ruled class.

In capitalism, being the propertied class, the bourgeoisie have control over the forces of production including the labour power. By virtue of this position, they exploit easily the proletariat. As Stalin writes, "the fundamental law of capitalism is maximum profit". To accumulate profit, the bourgeoisie resort to merciless exploitation of labour. As if they were wolves and vampires, they suck blood out of the workers.

USE-VALUE AND EXCHANGE-VALUE

Every commodity has a value. It is not only useful in itself, but useful to others. This value it has for others, that is consumers, is known as *use-value*. At the same time, it has another value, known as *exchange-value* which is meant for the owner. However it is the exchange-value that is fundamental to a commodity rather than use-value. A commodity becomes a use-value only after passing through the general process of exchange, without altering its qualities. As exchange-values, the commodities differ in quantity, but they are of equal quality; and as use-values they differ in quality.

But a commodity involves fetishism: it has contradictory nature and mystical character. "This fetishism has its origin in the peculiar character of the labour that produces them". A commodity is the product of labour; it is produced by the worker. It is nothing but the labour objectified. So,

naturally the credit for its value should go to the worker. But the commodity, with its entire two-fold value, goes to the capitalist. The moment the commodity is produced, it is wholly taken over by the capitalist along with its value. Workers have nothing to do with what they produce.

The value of the commodity that it can be used and exchanged is proportional to the quantity of the average human labour engaged in it. So the wages payable to the worker in compensation for the labour power he has rented for creating the value of the commodity must be equal to the amount of human labour. But the wages fall below the amount of human labour rented. In other words, the wages fall below the value of the commodity. The capitalist exploits the worker by expropriating half of the value of the human labour and pays only for the remaining value of the labour.

SURPLUS VALUE

Further the capitalist expropriates the surplus value of labour. Marx divides labour into two kinds - *necessary labour* and *surplus labour.* Suppose, a worker in an industry works ten hours a day, it means that he creates a product whose value (exchange-value) is equal to the value of the commodity. But his wage falls below the value of the commodity he produces. In that case, it means that he receives the wages only for a part of the labour time he has worked, say five hours. What about the remaining part of the labour time–remaining five hours? It goes unpaid which means that the worker has worked for the capitalist. The value of that five hours work goes to the capitalist and does not serve any use for the worker concerned.

When the wages the worker receives are hardly equivalent to half of the labour time, say five hours, the labour put in for that amount of time is called *necessary labour.* The labour put in for the extra amount of time, say remaining five hours, for which no wage consideration is made, is called *surplus labour.* The value of surplus labour is expropriated by the capitalist.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the capitalist is not satisfied with the expropriation of the value of labour. He creates surplus value of labour and expropriates it for his interests. This points to one of Marx's colourful metaphors: "Capitalism . . . , vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks".

KEY WORDS

Exchange-value: The value of a commodity that it can be marketed and exchanged in sale.

Use-value: The value of a commodity that it can be used for meeting the material needs.

Surplus value: The value of surplus labour of a worker. When the wages the worker receives are hardly equivalent to half of the labour time, say five hours, the labour put in for that time is called necessary labour. The labour put in for the extra amount of time, say another five hours, for which no wage consideration is made, is called surplus labour.

ALIENATION

One of the aspects of modern industrial capitalism is the feeling of estrangement of the workers in their social life. Marx refers to it as "alienation". It is a sense of frustration. It involves a feeling of separation. Though the work is a part of the production system, so to say, vital part of production system, the worker who renders it feels detached and separated from the system. Marx considers this feeling a direct result of the operation of the capitalist industrial system.

A major contradiction in the capitalist system is that it is the workers who produce the commodities. But they themselves are treated as commodities. They are bought by the capitalists when necessary and discarded when no longer needed. In such a situation, the workers feel alienated – separated from the system with which they are associated.

ASPECTS OF ALIENATION

According to Marx, the alienation experienced by workers involves four aspects:

Alienation from the Productive Activity

First, the workers are alienated from productive activity. Ideally work is satisfying to human beings as a means to meet their needs and develop their potential. But in capitalist society, the work is not appealing or satisfying to the workers, because they do not work for themselves; instead, they work for the capitalist. Having the right to use the workers, the capitalist uses them in any way as he sees fit. He decides what the workers should do in the work. The nature, quantum and pace of the work to be done by the workers and the quantity and quality of goods to be produced – all are decided by the capitalist. The workers have no voice in their work. In such a condition what worker is likely to be happy?

Furthermore, the work in capitalist industrial society is often tedious and mechanical. It is done in a routine, mechanical manner. There is no room for the worker to apply his judgement, imagination and initiative. As everything is to be done in the manner and at the pace decided by the owner of the means of production, the worker's spirit of initiative and imagination are not allowed to find expression. The worker just works mechanically without any personal involvement.

Alienation from the Product

Second, the workers are alienated not only from the productive activities, but also from the object of their activities – the products. Any commodity turned out in the production system is the product of labour. It is the labour objectified. But it does not belong to the workers, to be used by them in order to satisfy their basic needs. Instead the product, like the process that resulted in its production, belongs to the capitalist who is not involved in its production. The capitalist takes it away and disposes of it in exchange for profit.

Not only do the workers have no control over the product, they do not even have a very good sense, in many cases, of what they are producing. They often perform highly specialized tasks and as a result have little sense of their role in the total production process. For example, automobile assembly-line workers who tighten a few bolts on an engine assembly may have little sense of their role in the production of engine, let alone of their contribution to the production of the entire car. Assembly lines often are so long and involve so many stems that the individuals are reduced to insignificant roles in the overall process. Playing such small roles in the process, workers often come to feel that it is the assembly line – rather than the people who work on it – that produces the final product.

Alienation from Fellow Workers

Third, the workers are alienated from their fellow workers. Marx's assumption is that people basically need and want to work co-operatively in order to appropriate from nature what they need to survive. But in

capitalism, this natural co-operation is eliminated. The workers work side by side, yet as they are strangers, they do not act co-operatively. Even if the workers on the assembly line, for example, are close friends, the nature of technology divides and separates them; they work in isolation.

But the worse situation arises when the workers happen to be locked in outright competition and sometimes conflict. In order to extract maximum productivity and to prevent the development of co-operative relationships, the capitalist pits one worker against another to see who can produce more, work more quickly, or please the boss more. The ones who succeed are given a few extra rewards; those who fail are discarded. In either case, considerable hostility is generated among the workers towards their peers. This is useful to the capitalist because it tends to deflect hostility that otherwise may be aimed at him. The isolation and interpersonal hostility tend to make workers in capitalism alienated from fellow workers.

Alienation from Human Potential

Finally and most generally, workers are alienated from their own human potential. Ideally, the work is an expression of the best qualities in human beings. But when the workers are alienated from the work, the workers do not express their human potential. In other words, they alienate themselves from human potential (or what marx calls *species-being*). As Marx notes, a worker "does not fulfil himself in his work, but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not freely develop his physical and mental energies, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself to be at home during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless". Marx throws the blame on industrial capitalism for this state of affairs. He argues that productive activity, ideally an expression of the best qualities in human beings, is perverted by industrial capitalism to express the worst aspects of human life.

CONCLUSION

Although workers experience alienation as a personal problem, Marx maintains that it is really a consequence of industrial capitalism. But he believes that industrial workers can overcome their alienation by uniting them into a social class and thereby gaining greater control over the workplace and the products of their labour. For this, he does not focus on limited reforms of factory life within the general frameword of capitalist economic system. Rather he envisions a revolutionary overthrow of capitalist oppression and a transition to collective ownership of the means of production (socialism) and eventually to ideal communism.

KEY WORD

Alienation: A feeling of the workers that the work lacks meaning which results in estrangement from the work and workplace.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The condition of primitive communism was the feature of
   (A) Asiatic order
   (B) Ancient order
   (C) Feudal order
   (D) Socialist order
2. The two classes of the capitalist order are
   (A) Patricians and plebeians
   (B) Lords and serfs
   (C) Bourgeoisie and proletariat
   (D) Managers and workers
3. The source of social change, according to Marx, is
   (A) Development of forces of production
   (B) Intellectual development
   (C) Idea
   (D) Conflict

4. Discuss the laws implied in Marx's doctrine of dialectical materialism.
5. Examine the materialistic interpretation which Marx gives to human history.
6. Describe the different modes of production which Marx identifies in the human history.
7. Discuss Marx's conception of class.
8. State the conditions under which the class differentiation crystallizes into class struggle in the capitalist system.
9. Explain Marx's theory of surplus value.
10. Discuss the aspects of alienation identified by Marx in the modern industrial capitalism.

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UNIT -IV

MAX WEBER

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Max Weber (1864–1920) was born on 21st April 1964 in a place known as Erfurt Thurngia in Germany. In his early formative years, he was a sickly person with a shy and withdrawing nature. However he was a ravenous reader. Even at the age of fourteen, he had mastered the works of the philosophers like Goethe, Spinoza, Kant and Schobenhaur.

At the age of eighteen, he joined Heidelberg University and studied law. At the same time, he developed interest in economics, history, philosophy and politics. After completing his studies at Heidelberg University, he joined military service at Strasbourg. At that time his paternal uncle Hermann Baumgharten and his wife Ida were living at Strasbourg. Ida was also Weber's mother's sister. She had an ardent interest in the religious affairs and uncompromising loyalty to the religious standards. Her religious orientation impressed Weber and led him to start appreciating religious matters and values.

In 1884, he left the military service and went to Berlin and joined his parents who were then living there. In 1886, he appeared for the Bar examination and underwent training in the practice of law. After the completion of training in 1891, he practised as a junior lawyer in Berlin courts for some time. Then he joined Berlin University as instructor in law. In 1889, he did his Ph.D. thesis on 'History of Commercial Societies in the Middle Ages'. He also did post-doctoral research on the 'Roman Agrarian History'. These academic achievements enabled him to get appointment as lecturer in economics in Freibourg University. In the same year, his marriage with Marianne Schmitger took place. By dint of hard work and intensive scholarly work, he rose to the position of professor of economics in the same university in 1896. After a brief stint of service in the

professor's post, he left Freibourg University and joined Heidelberg University as professor of economics.

Weber was a chronic worker. His chronic scholarly work undermined his health. Added to it, his father's death and inner family conflicts aggravated his ill-health and led to nervous and mental breakdown. So he had to quit the teaching service to undertake treatment. In 1903, he recovered his health and became normal.

He joined a journal, *Archiv Fur Sozial Wissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* as a co-editor. He wrote a series of articles in it. Also he wrote in other journals, namely, *Wahrheit, Frankfurter Zeitung, Logos*. All these articles and the lectures he gave here and there were later brought out in the form of voluminous books. The noteworthy among them were *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–1905), *General Economic History* (1919–1920), *Economy and Society* (1922), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1922), *The Society of Religion* (1922), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (1946), *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences* (1949).

In 1910, he founded the German Sociological Society in collaboration with Tonnies and Simmel to promote studies in sociology. Except for a brief interruption caused by the First World War (1914–1918), his scholarly work went on in full swing. It came to an end when he breathed his last on 14th June, 1920.

IDEAL TYPE

IDEAL TYPE AS A CONCEPTUAL TOOL

Max Weber had a concern for methodology of social sciences. As a part of this concern he developed a method called Ideal Type. Literally ideal type means a kind of objects or things with a particular character that is the best or standard example of it.

Weber developed ideal type as a conceptual tool to tackle the problem of scientific credentials in social sciences. Any phenomenon will not be simple and uniform. It will be full of infinite diversity and have several kinds. Weber argues that no scientific system has so far developed any conceptual apparatus which can distinguish the different kinds of a phenomenon and to explain its infinite diversity. To understand a phenomenon, there may be a concept of general nature. But Weber says that when a social scientist applies concept of general nature to a phenomenon, it will not be helpful to identify its different kinds. Above all it is likely to leave out some of the distinctive features of the phenomenon. Only ideal type will be the expedient tool to understand it.

CONSTRUCTION OF AN IDEAL TYPE

When an ideal type is constructed, it is constructed as a pure type. Just as a chemist designates an element after having freed it of the materials with which it is combined, in the same manner, an investigator designates a phenomenon about which ideal type is to be constructed, after having freed it of the phenomena with which it is combined. For instance, we may talk about the construction of ideal type of authority. There are three types of authority, namely, rational-legal, traditional and charismatic, each of which is defined by the motivation of obedience or by the nature of legitimacy claimed by the leader. In reality, each type of authority does not exist in a pure form. There is a mixture or confusion of the three types

of authority. Because these types merge in reality, each one must be designated after having isolated it from the other types and defined rigidly.

The ideal type is a mental construct. It is formed by abstracting and combining certain traits of the phenomenon. But the ideal type is constructed not merely by abstracting the traits. The traits are exaggerated or accentuated. Thus, as the traits abstracted from the concrete reality of a phenomenon are exaggerated or accentuated, certainly they do not represent the traits as such. If the traits are reproduced as such, the type so constructed will just be the actual reproduction of the reality. But the traits are not exactly the same as the actual, observed traits. It is for this reason that the ideal type is called so.

CHARACTERISTICS OF IDEAL TYPE

The ideal type does not represent the concrete reality in all its aspects. Only the typical and essential traits of the reality are abstracted, exaggerated and combined so as to form an ideal type. So it does not represent the common or average characteristics of the reality. For instance, should there be an ideal type of a leader, the average leader in any given setting or at any given time will be quite different from the leader portrayed in the ideal type (i.e. ideal typical leader). The characteristics imputed to a leader in the ideal type are, of course, taken from the actual facts existing in reality. But once they are exaggerated or accentuated, they do not correspond exactly to the actual facts. There will always be a gap between the two.

Thus the ideal type, though constructed from actual facts existing in reality, does not represent or describe the total reality. It is of pure type in a logical sense. According to Weber, "in its conceptual purity, this ideal mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality". This is the way in which ideal type is constructed. It is always ideal. It remains at least one step away from the concrete reality with which it is concerned. Seldom if ever, Weber says, can there be in real life a phenomenon which exactly corresponds with the mentally constructed type.

As the ideal type thus represents only the distinctive, essential and typical characteristics or traits of a phenomenon, it does not present the total reality; it does not explain everything. It exhibits partial conception of the whole.

USES OF IDEAL TYPE

Yet the ideal type serves to understand the subject matter with which it is concerned. It makes the subject matter intelligible by avoiding the confusion and obscurity in the concept used.

Further, by providing a point of reference, the ideal type serves to understand the subject matter through comparative analysis. Marx considers ideal type the best tool for comparison. When the actual reality is compared with the ideal type, it can be found out how far the actual reality approximates to the ideal type and how far it deviates from it. The discovery of deviation will provoke the attempt to go in for the causal explanation of the same. In the study of social action, Weber says, by the ideal type, the sociologist "is able to measure the gap between the ideal-typical objectively possible action and the empirical action, and ascertain the part played by irrationality and chance or by the intrusion of accidental, emotional and other elements".

By using the ideal type as a methodological tool, Weber demonstrates, we can construct hypotheses concerning the causal relationship between two phenomena and test the same to find out if there is any such relationship. Weber himself furnishes an illustrating case in this respect. He believes that there is a causal relationship between the Protestantism and the development of modern capitalism. For testing this hypothesis, he constructs an ideal type of Protestant on the basis of distinctive features of the Protestants during the Reformation. By using the ideal type of Protestant as the point of comparative reference, he examines whether the concrete conduct of the Protestants in the seventeenth century approximated to the ideal type of Protestant. On finding out that the concrete reality of the conduct of the Protestants in the seventeenth century

approximated to the ideal type of Protestant, he has his hypothesis confirmed.

An ideal type serves not only as a source of hypothesis but also as a source of construction of concepts. An ideal type provides a concept for a phenomenon by marking its distinctive, typical characteristics. By adding one or more traits to those characteristics identified in the concept, additional concepts may be formulated. In discussing social relationship, Weber constructs an ideal type about it. *Social relationship* is the behaviour of a plurality of actors in so far as the action of one takes account of the action of others. This ideal type of social relationship serves to construct additional concepts in a sequence. When social relationship is organized into a group in which order is enforced, it is called *organized group.* If an organized group has its governing order concerned with territorial validity, it is called *territorially organized group.* If the order in such an organized group is enforced through legitimate exercise of imperative control, it is called *imperatively coordinated group.* An imperatively coordinated group is a *political group* if the imperative control involves the application and threat of physical force. A political group is a *state* if the use of physical force in the enforcement of order is vested in the hands of administrative staff as their monopoly. Thus a sequence of concepts come to light following the construction of an ideal type concerning the concept of social relationship.

KINDS OF IDEAL TYPE

An ideal type, though constructed by a single process, that is, abstraction, does not constitute a single kind. It falls into different kinds. As abstraction involves different levels, depending upon the level of abstraction, it falls into different kinds. Weber distinguishes three levels of abstraction and on that basis identifies three kinds of ideal type.

The first kind of ideal type relates to historical particulars. The specific historical realities of Western City, Protestant Ethic and Modern Capitalism are examples of this kind.

The second type relates to abstract elements of social reality that are observable in a variety of historical and cultural contexts, such as bureaucracy or feudalism.

The third kind of ideal type involves "rationalizing reconstruction of a particular kind of behaviour". For example, according to Weber, all propositions in economic theory are merely ideal-typical reconstructions of the ways men would behave were they actuated by purely economic motives. The theory of marginal utilities is an example of this kind. Man's utilization of consumption goods is greater or lesser depending upon the units available for consumption.

CONCLUSION

Weber regards ideal type as an efficient tool in comparative analysis. However, he cautions against "the tendency to treat the ideal typology as a *carte blanche* solution to all social analysis. It is strictly a 'methodological device' and is not intended to suggest that ideal type is a rational grid for logical observation and analysis" (Francis Abraham and John Henry Morgan).

KEY WORD

Ideal type: A methodological tool developed by Weber for comparative analysis. The existing reality is compared with the ideal type concerning the reality and sought to be understood how far it approximates to the ideal type and how far it deviates from it. Ideal type is constructed by abstracting the most commonly found features of a phenomenon.

CAUSALITY

Max Weber says that sciences are comprehensive. They attempt a comprehensive interpretation of the phenomena. The historical and sociological sciences also perform the same function in relation to their subject matter, social phenomena; they attempt a comprehensive interpretation of the social phenomena.

CAUSALITY

Weber adds that validity of a science lies not only in comprehensive interpretation but also in causal explanation of the phenomena. "Analysis of causal determinations is one of the procedures by which the universal validity of scientific results is insured" (Raymond Aron). So also, history and sociology aim not only at comprehensive interpretation but also at the causal explanation of the social phenomena. "The sociologist not only explains the system of beliefs and behaviour of collectivities; he also seeks to ascertain how things have come about, how a certain political organization influences economic organisation. In other words, the historical and sociological sciences seek to explain causally as well as to interpret comprehensively" (Aron).

According to Weber, the causal inquiry may be oriented in two directions, namely, historical and sociological. "To simplify matters, we shall call them historical causality and sociological causality" (Aron). *Historical causality* determines the unique circumstances that have given rise to a given event. *Sociological causality* assumes the establishment of a regular relationship between two phenomena, which need not take the form, 'if x occurs, then y will inevitably occur', but may take the form, 'if x occurs, it is probable that y will occur' – for example, the proposition (true or false) that if there is a despotic political regime, it is probable that there will be state intervention in the control of economy.

HISTORICAL CAUSALITY

The problem of historical causality is one of determining the role of various antecedents underlying an event. In this direction, the historical causality moves involving the following procedures.

(1) First, one must construct the historical entity whose cause one wishes to discover. That is, one must define accurately the characteristics of the historical entity one wants to explain causally. The historical entity may be a particular event like First World War or the Bolshevik revolution held in Russia.

(2) To get at the causes of the historical particular, say First World War, one must try to discover why the War broke out in August 1914. The causes of this particular event are not to be confused either with the causes of the frequency of wars in the history of Europe or with the phenomenon called war which is encountered in all civilizations. As only a particular historical event is the subject of causal understanding, only the causes related specially to it must be discovered.

Any historical particular is not an isolated and independent event in the history. It does not occur all of a sudden independently in the history. It is only a culmination of a sequence of events antecedent to it. So the causes of a historical particular must be sought among its antecedents. If the First World War is the entity one wants to explain causally, one must trace the events antecedent to it.

(3) To arrive at a causal determination in respect of the antecedents, one must follow the analysis of the historical particular and its antecedents with mental experiment which consists in imagining what would have happened had the antecedent elements happened differently or not at all.

For instance, the First World War broke out in August 1914, following a series of antecedent events. Austria had an eye on two small, independent buffer states Bosnia and Herzegovina which lay in Balkan area. As they lose to Russia, it could not do anything with them immediately. At

the same time Russia wanted to use the straits of Dardenels and Bosphorus for entering the Mediterranean Sea. The straits were under the control of Austria. So when the matter of annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was raised by Austria, Russia told it that it (Russia) would allow Austria to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina provided Austria would permit it to use the straits of Dardenels and Bosphorus. Austria did not signal any response to Russia's condition. In 1913, it annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina much to the exasperation of Russia. In 1914, a Serbian boy Gavrilo Prinsop, a student in Bosnia University shot at the Austrian heir-prince Archduke Francis Ferdinand. Infuriated over the incident, Austria served an ultimatum on Serbia asking for an explanation for the action of the Serbian boy. As Serbia and Russia were ethnically closer because of their people being Slavs, Serbia approached Russia for its advice on the matter of ultimatum. Russia advised it to turn a Nelson's eye to the ultimatum. When no reply came from Serbia to its ultimatum, Austria declared a war against Serbia in July 1913. Russia jumped into the fray by beginning mobilization of its armed forces in support of Serbia. France also joined Russia in the war efforts as an ally under a treaty existing between them. The war efforts on both sides exploded on 1st August, 1914 and the First World War broke out.

If the causal analysis is to be made on this historical particular, First World War, Weber says, one should recreate – imagine what would have happened, if *one* of the said antecedent events had not occurred or had been other than it was. In the same way, for causal analysis of any historical particular, one should proceed by imaginary alteration of one of the antecedent elements and try to decide what would have happened if this antecedent element had not been present or had taken a different form.

Any historical particular is a culmination of certain antecedent events. Without them, the course of the event would have been different. But Weber suggests that in the recreation – imaginary alteration of antecedent elements, one of them will be sufficient. That is, it will be sufficient to

imagine what would have happened if one of the antecedent elements had not occurred or had occurred differently.

(4) Finally, this imaginary evolution, constructed by hypothetically altering one of the antecedents should be compared with the real evolution (i.e. what actually happened), before the conclusion is made that the hypothetically altered element was one cause of the character of the historical entity under study.

Here a question arises: where to go for the real evolution for the comparison purpose? To this question, Weber gives an answer. Elsewhere in the absence or different occurrence of the concerned antecedent, the cause of the event would have turned out to be different. Such a real evolution in a different context can be taken for comparison purpose.

For this, Weber himself gives an example. He chooses the Persian Wars. In the Persian Wars, the Athenians repelled the attack of the Persians who invaded them at Marathon and Salamis and emerged victorious. During that period, the Athenians were evolving the religions of the Dionysian type, close to the Oriental religions and developing city-states. The victory of the Athenians in the Marathon and Salamis battles enabled them to preserve and sustain such cultural progress. Now let us imagine what would have happened to the Greek culture had the Athenians lost the battles and the Persians conquered Greece. We can hypothesize that given the Persian conquest of Greece, the cultural progress of the Greeks would have been stifled. For the causal effectiveness of the military victory of the Athenians, we construct this imaginary evolution comprising the said hypothesis.

For drawing the conclusion about the causal effectiveness of the military victory of the Athenians over the Persians or the defeat of the Persians in the battles, let us relate the imaginary recreation and hypothesis to the real evolution that occurred elsewhere involving the Persians. We can observe what took place in regions actually conquered by the Persian Empire. In the regions conquered by the Persian Empire,

the Persian culture was imposed on the vanquished with the result that the indigenous culture was ruined. On the basis of the real evolution taking place elsewhere, we can conclude that the real evolution in the case under study (cultural progress of the Athenians) would have been different if the antecedent element (military victory at Marathon and Salamis battles) would not have happened or taken a different form. Thus the causal relationship between the military victory and sustenance of cultural progress is established by means of this procedure.

SOCIOLOGICAL CAUSALITY

By the same token applied in historical causality, Weber explains the procedure to be followed in sociological causality. He insists on the very same procedure followed in historical causality for sociological causality such as the construction of the social entity concerned, tracing of the antecedent elements, imaginary evolution and comparison of imaginary evolution with real evolution. He attempts the causal analysis of development of modern capitalism by relating it to the Protestant Ethic. In discussing the cause-effect relationship between the two, he follows the very same procedure elaborated above, treating the Protestant Ethic as the cause of the development of modern capitalism.

PROBABILITY

By causality, Weber does not mean "making something inevitable". He describes it as "making something probable". In his view causal relation is to be expressed in terms of probability or chance and not in terms of inevitability. Many authors use the concept of causality only in terms of inevitablity. For instance they write that planned economy makes totalitarian regime inevitable. The implication of this proposition is that totalitarian regime will inevitably occur if there is a planned economy. According to Weber, all propositions of this kind, regarding determination of one element of society by another, must be expressed in terms of probability. Weber would say that if the economic regime is of total planning, it is probable that the political organization will be totalitarian. He would not say that in the economy of total planning, there will inevitably

be totalitarian political organization. So also, for the proposition of Marxists that private ownership of the instruments of production makes inevitable the political power of the minority possessing these instruments, Weber would suggest a modified form; private ownership of the instruments of production makes the political power of the minority possessing these instruments more probable.

PARTIALITY

Secondly, Weber conceives of the causal relations as partial and not total relations. By partial relations, he means that "a given fragment of reality makes probable or improbable. . . another fragment of reality' (Aron). He does not accept the view that one element of society will determine the whole society. "There is no such thing . . . as unilateral determination of the whole society by one element, whether this element be economic, political or religious" (Aron). His view is that one element may 'determine' another element, but not the whole of reality. For instance a certain economic regime or system may 'determine', that is, make probable a certain type of political organization and not the entire society.

This conception which denies the determination of the whole society by a single element, also denies that the whole of future society can be determined by some characteristic of the preceding society. A particular process, say rationalization or bureaucratization might have influenced another element, say, the nature of political regime. The process may continue inexorably. "But this process alone cannot determine the exact nature of the political regime of tomorrow" (Aron).

BILATERALITY

Thirdly, according to Weber, the causal relation between two elements is not unilateral; it is bilateral. In refutation of the popular historical materialism, Weber declares that causality is not a one-way relationship. An element does not determine other aspects of reality without being influenced by them. That which is influenced may also influence that which influences it. For this he cites the example of the relationship between

religion and economy. He agrees that economy may influence religion. Yet at the same time, he asserts, religion may also influence economy.

CONCLUSION

Thus Weber conceives of causal relations as probable, partial and two-way relations. Whether causality is historical or sociological, it embodies this conception.

KEY WORDS

Bolshevik revolution: Revolution launched by the Communist Party in Russia in the year 1917. It is sometimes referred to as 'October Revolution' since it was launched in the month of October, 1917. The members of the Russian Communist Party were then called Bolsheviks. Hence the revolution launched by them is referred to as Bolshevik revolution.

Bureaucratization: Process of introducing in administration rigid hierarchy of officials, red tapism and other features of bureaucracy.

Causality: Finding out the circumstances or factors that have given rise to a phenomenon or an event.

City-State: A sovereign state consisting of an autonomous city with its dependencies, developed during B.C. 6th century - 1st century, in Greece.

Dionysian (type of religion): (Religion) dominated by periodical orgiastic and dramatic festivals.

First World War: The World War that took place during the period of 1914 - 1918 between two rival blocs, namely 'triple alliance' (Austria, Germany and Italy) and 'triple entente' (Russia, France and England).

Persian Wars: Refer to wars that took place between Persian Empire and Athenians during the period of B.C. 6th century – 5th century. The wars were organised during the regimes of the Persian emperors, Darius I (B.C. 521 – 486) and Xerxes I (B.C. 485 - 465) against the Athenians.

SOCIAL ACTION

For many a sociologist, sociology is a science of social structure. But, for Weber, social action is the subject matter of sociology. In his book, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, he defines sociology as "the science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action . . . ."

INDIVIDUAL ACTION

But in the discussion of social action, Weber focuses not on the collectivity, but on the individual. He says, "Action in the sense of subjectively understandable orientation of behaviour exists only as the behaviour of one or more *individual* human beings". In sociological work and also in everyday thinking about social relations, both individuals and supra-individual entities (i.e. collectivities) exist. Weber does not deny the existence of collectivities. But, he says, "for the subjective interpretation of action in sociological work, these collectivities must be treated as solely the resultants and modes of organization of the particular acts of individual persons. . " Weber's position here now would be regarded as 'methodological individualist', involving the claim that in so far as the collectivities may be said to be the resultants of particular acts of individual persons, in the analysis of social action, focus may better be directed on the individual actors and their actions" (Ted Benton).

INFLUENCE OF ACTIONS OF OTHERS

Thus in the study of social action, Weber turns the focus to the individual. Action is social, explains Weber, in so far as it "takes account of the behaviour of others and is oriented in its course". In other words, when the action of an individual is somehow influenced or guided by the actions or behaviour of other individuals, it is called social action. According to Weber, any 'meaningful behaviour' of an individual is to be termed action. As long as an individual's behaviour is related to some intended purpose,

it becomes meaningful and deserves to be termed action. When such a behaviour - action is oriented to the action of others or influenced or guided by the action of others, it is called social action. If an action, though meaningful, is not oriented to the actions of others, it does not become a social action. Solitary prayer, for example, is a meaningful action, but it is not a social action.

Of course, for an action to be social, it must somehow be influenced or guided by the actions of others. But it needs to be made clear here that the influencing action need not necessarily be contemporaneous with the modified action, that is, it need not be occurring at the same time or just before the commencement of the modified action. It may be a past occurrence or even an expected action in the future.

When we say that action becomes social when it is influenced or guided by the actions or behaviour of other individuals, it means that there can be no social action in isolation. That is, an individual living in complete seclusion removed from interpersonal contacts cannot do a social action. The meditation of a recluse is not to be included in the category of social action. Therefore social action is possible, if and only if, there is another human being whose action or behaviour prompts the given individual to act in a particular manner.

Again, mere presence of another actor in a situation does not lead to social action. Thee must be an interaction between the two. It is only when the two interact that the influence of one action over another comes into play. Considering the importance of social interaction for social action, Weber writes that "Social action takes the form of social interaction of *soziale beziehung*".

IMITATION

When the individual imitates the action of others, that itself results in social action. In the event of imitation, the action of the individual becomes similar to that of others. But it should be kept in mind that similarity alone is not the criterion of social action. Weber emphasizes that

only upon understanding the meaning of action of others, if an individual imitates it, his action can become a social action. Mere blind imitation is no social action. Only if the imitation is based on the understanding of the meaning of the action imitated, it becomes social action.

MEANING

Weber says that action is a form of conduct – the German word is *verhalten*. "It is action when man assigns a certain meaning to his conduct" (Aron). So, according to Weber, every actor assigns a meaning to his action. When, by that meaning, the action relates to the behaviour of other persons and is oriented to it, the action becomes social.

Thus Weber regards the element of meaning as a sine qua non for action and social action, It is by the subjective meaning that conduct becomes action and action, social action. Considering its crucial importance, Weber insists on the understanding of the subjective meaning in the study of action and social action.

For the understanding of the subjective meaning underlying human action, Weber refers to two methods, namely *deuten* and *verstehen*. *Deuten* involves the interpretation of the meaning through observation. *Verstehen* involves the comprehension of the meaning through the understanding of the motive underlying the action. For this, he says, one need not go in for intuition, sympathetic participation or empathy. By using common sense, one can understand the motive. Also one can use the existing behaviour maxims evolved out of the mature human experience to understand the motive.

TYPES OF ACTION

Max Weber enumerates two advantages in understanding the meaning of the action. One, the action can be explained. Two, types of action can be classified as an introduction to the understanding of the intelligible structure of behaviour. By using ideal-type methodology, Weber classifies action into four types. They are:

1. *Zweckrational* action or goal-oriented action.

2. *Wertrational* action or value-oriented action.
3. Affective action.
4. Traditional action.

Of these four types, Weber considers the first two types as the ones that would, in the fullest sense, count as actions as they are rational and fall within the meaningful behaviour. The other two types are not rational. Yet Weber includes them in his typology of actions since they are in the borderline of meaningfulness.

In the *zweckrational* action, the actor chooses both the ends (goals) and the means to those ends in a calculated manner. In other words, the actor conceives his goal clearly and chooses the suitable means to achieve it. In the choice of both, he acts in a calculated manner. The action of a commander to win victory in a battle, the action of a trader to make profit, the action of a student to pass in the examination are examples of *zweckrational* action.

The *wertrational* action is related to a value. Here the actor does not choose a value. To uphold a value he has interrationalized, he chooses a means and that choice is made rationally. For instance, a captain of a sinking ship may go down with the ship instead of saving himself because in his sense of value orientation, the act of deserting a sinking ship is dishonourable and unbecoming. He chooses rationally going down with the sinking ship.

Affective action results from the emotional state of mind of the actor. When a teacher canes a pupil because he caused disturbance in the class by his mischievous behaviour or when the spectators hurl bottles and missiles at the players in a match when the latter did not play to the expectation of the spectators, such act is dictated by the immediate emotion of the subject, that is, irritation.

Traditional action is guided by customs and long-standing beliefs which have become habitual or second nature so that to act according to

tradition, the actor need not imagine a goal, or be conscious of a value or be stirred by an immediate emotion; "he just obeys reflexes that have become entrenched by conditioning" (Aron). Rising from the seats when the elders step in and removing the chappals while entering a sacred place are examples of traditional actions.

CONCLUSION

Thus Weber differentiates four typical forms of action. However he is well aware that any given action usually involves some combination of the four types of action.

5.3.1 KEY WORDS

Action: Behaviour to which actor attaches subjective meaning.

Affective action: Action resulting from the emotional state of the mind of the actor.

Behaviour maxims: Sayings expressing general truths about behaviour. They are born out of maturity of experience. Eg. 'Birds of the same feather flock together'.

Traditional action: Action which is guided by customs and long-standing beliefs which have become habitual.

Wertrational action: Action related to a value.

Zweckrational action: Action oriented to a goal.

AUTHORITY

One of the aspects expressed in social action is authority. Especially in the political sphere, the human actions involve the exercise of authority. However, Weber uses only the term domination in this context. The German word he used in this context is *herrschaft*. Aron translates this term as 'domination'. Domination is the "probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (Weber).

Domination can have a variety of bases, legitimate as well as illegitimate. But what mainly interests Weber is the legitimate form of domination or what is called authority. So, Weber's discussion of *herrschaft* which Aron translates as 'domination' is centered around the legitimate form of domination, that is, authority.

POWER AND AUTHORITY

To make the concept of authority (legitimate form of domination), Weber relates it to the concept of power. In ordinary usage the term 'power' means strength or capacity to control or to influence the behaviour of others. But Weber defines it as the possibility or opportunity of imposing one's will upon others even in the face of opposition. A person or a group is powerful in relating to someone else. For this reason, power is relational; it involves at least two parties. Such a situation is marked by inequality, since the one who has the power imposes it on others. Power is greater or lesser according to whether the master's probability to obtain the others' submission to his will is greater or lesser.

Authority, on the other hand, refers to the master's chance to obtain the obedience of those who theoretically owe it to him. The difference between power and authority is that power does not imply the notion of the right to command and the duty to obey between the actors in social

interaction, whereas authority implies legitimate right to command and to extract obedience. In other words, authority is the legitimate power.

TYPES OF AUTHORITY

Authority derives its legitimacy from three sources. On the basis of these sources, Weber classifies authority into three types. They are:

1. Rational-legal authority
2. Traditional authority
3. Charismatic authority

These three types of authority are described in detail below.

Rational-Legal Authority

This is the authority which is based on laws, decrees and rules. The authority that is exercised in the administrative sphere is the typical case of this kind of authority. It is both rational and legal.

Authority is vested in the regular administrative staff. This they derive from the laws, decrees and rules. They are vested with authority on the basis of their achieved qualifications which are prescribed by the laws themselves. Once appointed to exercise authority, they discharge their function as a profession. In the exercise of authority, they do not act according to their whims and fancies. They act in accordance with the norms and guidelines laid down by laws and within the limits set by the laws. Thus this authority bears a rational and legal character.

The people obey the authority exercised by the administrative staff since they recognize it and feel obliged to obey it. They acknowledge and respect the legality of both the laws and titles of those who implement the laws. It is their belief in the legality of the laws and titles of those who implement the laws that enables the administrative staff to enforce the authority and to obtain obedience. For instance, we stop our vehicles when the traffic policeman orders us to do so, because we respect the authority vested in him by law and the title he carries to enforce the law.

In the case of rational-legal authority, the authority is derived from laws. So, when obedience is shown to those who exercise the authority, it is not meant towards the men, but towards the laws. When we obey a traffic policeman, it is not because he is Mr. X or Mr. Y, but because of his position which represents the law.

Traditional Authority

This is the authority derived from traditions or customs. Authority comes to be vested in a person or group as a matter of tradition. For example, a king or queen becomes a ruler by virtue of inheriting the crown. Similarly, in a family a senior member becomes the head and exercises authority because this has been so in the past.

In the case of traditional authority, the ruler may be competent or inefficient. But it does not matter when the ruler's authority is legitimate because of tradition. People obey the ruler's authority and show respect to him since they believe in the sanctity of tradition by virtue of which the traditional ruler exercises authority. It is their belief which constitutes the basis and support of the traditional authority.

Weber differentiates two early forms of traditional authority. One is *gerontocracy* which involves the rule by the elders. The other is *primary patrimonialism* which involves leaders who inherit their position. In the case of the former, by virtue of custom, elders assume authority. In the case of the latter, as a matter of tradition of inheritance, the heirs become leaders. However both forms involve the exercise of authority by the leaders and obedience is shown to them by the subjects. In both forms, obedience is shown actually not to the occupants of the position, but to the source from which they derive their position, that is, tradition.

Charismatic Authority

This authority is based on the extraordinary devotion to an individual who captures the fancy and devotion of ordinary people by means of what is called charisma. Charisma (which literally means 'gifts of grace') means an extraordinary, exceptional quality. When a person has such a quality

or when the people impute it to a person, he is able to lead or inspire the people without relying on set rules or traditions.

We can find numerous examples of charismatic leaders throughout history. Prophets, saints and some political leaders figure among the examples of such leaders. Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammed, Satya Sai Baba, Bangaru Adigalar, George Washington, Lenin, Hitler, Gandhiji, Sukarno and M.G. Ramachandran, to name a few, were/are charismatic leaders. They were/are revered by people for their exceptional qualities and magnetic appeal, not because they represented/represent rational-legal or traditional authority.

Interestingly, in practice, charismatic authority is derived more from the belief of loyal followers than from the actual qualities of the person. Here the people's belief about the person's extraordinary ability is based upon his miracles, revelations, exceptional feats and baffling successes. As long as the charismatic leaders continue to prove their extraordinary, miraculous powers in the eyes of their followers, their influence and authority remain intact.

Thus the charismatic authority rests upon the belief of the followers rather than upon the actual qualities of the persons. The followers believe that the leaders they adore are endowed with extraordinary, superhuman abilities and qualities. In such a state of belief the followers have about their leaders, even the ordinary acts of the charismatic leaders appear to the followers to be the demonstrations of superhuman ability. The ostentatious sexual activity of the long-time Indonesian President, Sukarno appeared to the Indonesians to be an act of god and a sign of heroism. By contrast the Indians saw Mahatma Gandhi's celibacy as a demonstration of superhuman self-discipline.

Since charismatic authority is tied to a single personality, it can endure only so long as the charismatic leader survives. Upon his death or disappearance, it may cease. The person who succeeds the leader may not have the charismatic powers. As a result, the movement or organization based upon the charismatic authority of a leader may face the risk of

collapse. Weber argues that the long-term survival of a charismatic movement requires the *routinization of charismatic authority*: the transformation of charismatic authority into some combination of traditional and rational-legal authority. Christianity, for example, began as a cult based on the personal charisma of Jesus Christ. But the Christianity persisted after the death of Jesus, gradually becoming established as the Roman Catholic Church, now based on a combination of traditional and rational-legal authority. Similarly the political movement started by George Washington and built upon his personal charisma survived even after his death through the routinizatin of his personal ideals into American Constitutional System and the norm of two-term presidency.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, one can notice that Weber presents each of the three types of authority as ideal type. In reality, no political system or authority system fits exactly into any of these categories.

5.4.1 KEY WORDS

Authority: Legitimate power. It is exercised by one who has a right to do so, on another who has theoretically a duty to obey.

Charismatic authority: Authority based on the extraordinary, exceptional quality of a particular person.

Gerontocracy: Rule by the aged.

Power: Probability or opportunity of imposing one's will upon others even against their will.

Primary patrimonialism: System of authority in which authority position is inherited. Eg. Monarchy in which the eldest child succeeds to the office of the king.

Rational-legal authority: Power legitimised and defined by *law* and held by legally qualified office-holder.

Routinization of charismatic authority: Transformation of charismatic authority into a combination of traditional and rational-legal authority.

Traditional authority: Power legitimised and defined by *tradition* and held by persons qualified by tradition.

BUREAUCRACY

Weber believes that the modern organizations have increased in size and complexity in view of the creation of more structural units and divisions and employment of large numbers of people. For meshing the various activities of the units and coordinating the efforts of large numbers of people, a mechanism is needed. Weber perceives bureaucracy to be the best mechanism for this purpose. In his view, only such a mechanism that involves the rational-legal authority system can be suitable for modern organisations. As bureaucracy is "the purest type of exercise of legal authority", he favours bureaucracy, an administrative set-up characterized by specialization, hierarchy and system of rules.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BUREAUCRACY

Weber worked in the military service in the German government. So he had a chance for first-hand observation of bureaucracy. Such experience enabled him to develop an ideal type or model of bureaucracy. In that model, he attributes the following characteristics to bureaucracy.

Rules and Regulations

The distinctive feature of bureaucracy is that it is governed by formal, written rules and regulations. Every matter is dealt with and decided according to the rules without regard to personal considerations. Even in the treatment of the staff, no personal consideration is allowed to interfere. All are treated uniformly according to organizational rules. Even if they happen to be relatives or friends, they are treated in the same way as everyone else.

Distribution of Work and Authority

In the bureaucratic set-up, the administrative work is divided into smaller tasks and distributed among the personnel in the form of official duties. Thus everyone in the organization gets a specific function, that is,

an official duty under such division. Along with the function, the authority necessary to carry it out is also given to the official. The authority vested in an official is clearly delineated and delimited by rules. The rules prescribe the amount and sphere of authority and set limits to its exercise. Every official can exercise only such amount of authority as permitted by rules and should use it only within the prescribed limits set by the rules. They cannot exceed that amount and go beyond those limits.

Weber emphasizes that in the bureaucratic set-up, each official must not only have a specific job and the necessary authority to carry it out, but also he must know the limits of his job-rights and power so as not to overstep the boundaries between his role and those of others. In Weber's opinion, only in such condition, the whole structure will remain durable.

Inappropriable Position

When a person gets a specific position – job under the division of functions, he is allowed to occupy it for a specific tenure. He is not allowed to appropriate it; it always remains a part of the organization. Even the position one holds for a specific tenure is not allowed to be monopolized by the incumbent during the tenure. It is reallocated according to the needs of the organization.

Hierarchy

In the bureaucratic structure, the position (offices) are arranged in an order of rank – that is, in a hierarchy. Certain offices and jobs are placed in the upper or higher rank and others, in the lower rank. In this process, no office is left out.

People in the lower positions are supervised by those in higher positions. As those in the top have a greater responsibility towards the organisation, than those at the bottom, responsibility falls on their shoulders to see that the work goes on adequately and properly in the organization. By supervising and directing those at the bottom, the officials at the top ensure that the organization functions effectively.

Specialized Work of Officials

The administrative work is a technical and complex job. It cannot be handled by ordinary men. It can be handled only by those who have specialisd knowledge about it and training in it. Therefore the people with the qualifications of professional or technical competence, that is, those who have specialised knowledge about and training in the administrative work are appointed as officials in the bureaucratic order to deal with the complex matters of administration. The appointment is made on the basis of the establishment of the technical competence of the candidates and not on the basis of any other extraneous consideration. The technical competence of the candidates is established by certification.

In the bureaucratic set-up, nobody remains stagnant in the position to which he is originally appointed. There is a provision for those remaining in one position to move up to a relatively higher position. This provision of promotion not only removes stagnation and lethargy in the administration but also raises the morale of the staff and reinforces their commitment to the organization. The promotion also is made on the basis of merit (competence) and seniority and not on the basis of personal considerations. This ensures that competent people fill offices. The presumably competent people do jobs better than those who gain an office based on family ties, personal friendship or political favour.

Payment by the Company

The services of the officials do not go unrewarded in the bureaucratic set-up. The officials are duly paid salaries by the company for their services. Weber points out that the officials should be compensated by salaries and not by payments from clients. He insists upon this aspect because such salary payment will ensure that the primary commitment of the officials will be to the organization and not to the outsiders.

Records and Files

Administrative decisions, rules, procedures and activities of the organization are recorded on written documents which are preserved in

files. These files ensure uniformity in decision-making and continuity in administration. In the event of change of administration, the files serve new administration to know the decisions of the old administration and to go by them in dealing with the similar matters, with the result that apart from uniformity in decision-making, continuity in administration is maintained.

Separation of the Administrative Staff from the Ownership of Means of Production

Bureaucracy involves a principle that the members of the administrative staff should be completely separated from ownership of the means of production. Accordingly the owners of means of production do not become a part of the administrative machinery of the organization. As an extension of this principle, there exists, in theory, a complete separation of the property belonging to the organization which is controlled within the spheres of office from the personal property of the officials. The segregation of the personal residence of the official from the organization is an illustration of such separation. Weber maintains that this segregation keeps the official's bureaucratic status from being infringed by his personal demands.

NEGATIVE FEATURES OF BUREAUCRACY

As for administration, bureaucracy proves itself to be an efficient model. Considering this aspect, Weber praises bureaucracy as follows:

From a purely technical point of view, a bureaucracy is capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency, and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and its reliability. It thus makes possible a particularly high degree of calculability of results for the heads of organization and for those acting in relation to it. It is finally superior both in intensive efficiency and in the scope of its operations and is formally capable of application to all kinds of adminsitrative tasks.

Despite his praise for bureaucracy, there is a fundamental ambivalence in Weber's attitude towards it. Although he details its advantages, he is well aware of its problems and shortcomings. He expresses various reservations about bureaucratic organization.

Red Tapism

One of the features of bureaucracy is the maintenance of records and files. Indeed this is a requirement for bureaucracy. In view of this requirement, excessive records, files and the like happen to be kept with regard to a matter and this system – referred to as 'red tape' – often makes dealing with bureaucracy so trying and so difficult.

Dehumanization of Relationships

In the bureaucratic set-up, there is no room for humanism in dealing with the matters concerning men. As everything has to be done and decided according to impersonal rules, there is no personal touch in the relationships between men. The human relationships are dehumanized. The bureaucrat behaves as a cog in the machine without any feelings and emotions. He acts like a robot.

Ritualism

In bureaucracy, it is the rules and regulations that matter most. When people follow the rules and regulations so closely that they forget the purpose of the rules and regulations, it results in organizational ritualism. Though rationality is involved in the close following of the rules and regulations, in actuality, as James Vander Zanden comments, it is a perverted rationality. The people are more concerned with the letter of the law than its spirit. They regard rules and regulations as ends in themselves rather than as means to organizational goals. This kind of behaviour, termed by Robert Merton, "bureaucratic ritualism", undermines the efficiency of the organization in the ultimate.

Oligarchy

he officials are arranged in a hierarchy in bureaucracy, it inevitably the division of the officials into superordinates and subordinates.

Power is concentrated in the hands of the superordinates who form a small group. Since they have access to organizational resources and information non-available to subordinates, they are able to increase their power and prestige. They decide every matter themselves. The subordinates look forward to them for direction in every matter without any independence or initiative. The German sociologist Robert Michels terms this rule of many by a few the "iron law of oligarchy."

5.5.1 KEY WORDS

Bureaucracy: An administrative set-up characterized by specialisation, hierarchy and system of rules.

Oligarchy: Rule by a few.

Organizational ritualism: Refers to a condition in which the organizational rules and regulations are closely followed as if they were ends in themselves rather than as means to ends. In such a condition, attention is paid only to the letter of the rules and not to the spirit of the same.

Red tape: Refers to a system of excessive and cumbersome records, files and the like. Such system often obstructs the flow of action in a matter.

RELIGION AND ECONOMY

Weber believes that the causal relationship between two factors will not be a one-way relationship. If one factor, a very important one affects other factors, in turn, it can be affected by others. Hence he does not accept Marx's theory of economic determinism which holds that the economic system, as the infrastructure of society, determines the superstructure of society including religion. As Marx's theory imputes a one-way relationship between the economic system and religion, Weber refuses to accept it. He considers that both economy and religion have a two-way relationship. If economy influences religion in one context, religion influences economy in another context.

In support of this view concerning the relationship between religion and economy, Weber cites the case of the economic system of the European countries dominated by the Protestants. In these countries, capitalism is markedly developed. In Weber's view, this is no mere coincidence. Protestantism played crucial role in the development of capitalism. He explains the rules of Protestantism in his thesis on the religion and economy.

CAPITALISM

Often capitalism is defined in terms of the enterprise aiming at maximum profit. But in Weber's view, it is not the idea of maximum profit that constitutes the essence of capitalism, but the idea of unlimited accumulation of profit. Every merchant has always wanted to make as much profit as possible in any transaction. What distinguishes the capitalist is that he does not limit his appetite for gain in accordance with custom or tradition, but is driven by a desire to keep on accumulating more.

WESTERN CAPITALISM

According to Weber, in every capitalist society, the aim is thus set or accumulating more and more profit. But the means adopted to realize the aim is not the same. In some capitalist societies, the aim is sought to be achieved by any kind of means – by conquest, speculation or adventure. But in the Western world, through a rational discipline, that is, through a rational organisation of work and production, the aim of accumulation of profit is sought to be achieved. It is this aspect – combination of the unlimited quest for profit and rational discipline – which distinguishes Western capitalism from other capitalisms and enables it to earn the designation of modern capitalism. In Weber's view, the Western capitalism is the prototype of capitalism.

ROLE OF PROTESTANTISM

Weber attributes the development of modern capitalism in the West to Protestantism. Religion is a force of social control. It prescribes certain guidelines of behaviour. It is in accordance with these guidelines that the followers direct or orient their activities. It is on the basis of this link between religion and human behaviour that Weber connects the Protestantism and development of modern capitalism in the West.

Protestantism prescribed a specific ethic for the economic behaviour of the people *(wirtschaftsethik)* in the sixteenth century. The ethic influenced the economic thoughts and actions of the people and shaped them so as to be favourable to the development of capitalism. The ethic did not directly have the effect on the rationalization of economy. It fostered a spirit in the people in favour of capitalism. It was this spirit, called spirit of capitalism, that operated as a motive force of the economic behaviour of the people and drove them to act in such manner as was favourable to the formation of capitalism.

CALVINISM

In the Middle Ages, among the Christians, a doctrine known as *predestination* was widely prevalent. The doctrine held that at birth, every

soul was predestined to heaven or hell. But the people would not know whether they were among the select who were destined for heaven or among the damned who were destined for hell, since 'the finite mind of men cannot comprehend the decision of the infinite mind of the absolute and transcendent God'.

When Protestantism arose in the sixteenth century in Europe in the period known as the Reformation in protest against the Catholic Church, a number of sects sprang up in the fold all over Europe. Calvinism was one such sect. It was founded by a French theologian and reformer, John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvin accepted the doctrine of predestination. Nevertheless he believed that there were earthly signs indicating whether the people were among the blessed or the damned. Success in business endeavours was an indication of being among the blessed; if one would have God's blessing, one's business would go well.

Hard Work

Calvinism not merely identified the economic success as a sign of salvation, but also showed the way for achieving the economic success. It preached that only through hard work can one earn economic success. Again, here it did not preach mere isolated activities. It emphasized that work become the style of life. This stood in contrast to the Christian ideal of the Middle Ages in which individuals simply engaged in isolated acts as the occasions arose. But Calvinism demanded of its followers "not single good works, but a life of good works combined into a unified system" (Weber). It added weight to the value of work, by proclaiming it not only as a means of earning economic success, but also as a virtue contributing to the glory of God.

Calvinism exhorted its followers to select a calling, a vocation and work hard at it. But such work shall not be ritualistic, but goal-oriented, the goal being profit-making. 'Earning money is a legitimate end in itself'. Hence with a view to earning money, one should work hard at one's vocation.

Avoidance of Life Pleasures

But the preaching of Calvinism did not end up with the hard work. It emphasized equally thrift and saving of money. It was oriented towards asceticism. Yet it did not advocate world-rejecting asceticism. Its asceticism was inner-worldly asceticism. Such asceticism did not reject the world; instead it actively urged its members to work within the world, but to reject the worldly or sensuous pleasures. Calvinism, viewed aesthetic matters and worldly pleasures with horror: fine clothes, dance and music, theatre and novels came from the devil as they would divert a person from working for the glory of God.

Calvinism urged its followers to work hard to earn as much money as possible. It exhorted its followers to avoid life pleasures and to plow the money earned back into the economic and business pursuits. It emphasized that money obtained from hard work shall not be used for unethical, aesthetic matters such as worldly pleasures but only for the very same sources from which it came, that is, the economic and business pursuits which involved hard work.

Other religions might have preached hard work or avoidance of life's pleasures. But they do not underline the pursuit of profit in such things. They see the pursuit of profit as an individual act motivated at least in part by greed. They view it morally suspect. But Calvinism turned profit-making into an ethos and proclaimed it as an ethical imperative. It stressed that it was the people's duty to ceaselessly increase their wealth. It was this backing of the moral system for the pursuit of profit that led to an unprecedented expansion of profit-seeking and ultimately to the capitalist system.

PROTESTANT ETHIC

The values, preached by Calvin, of hard-work, profit-making, sobriety, thrift, restraint and avoidance of earthly pleasures crystallized into an ethic which Weber calls Protestant Ethic. The ethic generated a spirit in the Protestants to work hard with a profit motive and accumulate savings that

could be used for further investment. This spirit – to use Weber's phrase, "spirit of capitalism" – paved way for the development of capitalism.

Weber does not directly link the idea system of the Protestant ethic to the development of capitalism; instead he is content to link the Protestant ethic to another system of ideas, "spirit of capitalism". It is through the "spirit of capitalism" that it comes into linkage with capitalism.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Weber begins his thesis by examining and rejecting alternative explanations of why capitalism arose in the West in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To those who contend that capitalism arose because the material conditions were ripe at that time, Weber retorts that material conditions were also ripe at other times, but capitalism did not arise. Weber also rejects the psychological theory that the development of capitalism was simply due to the acquisitive instinct. In his view, such an instinct always has existed, yet it did not produce capitalism in other situations. Weber's view is that the major explanatory variable is the set of religious ideas produced by the religious revolution of the sixteenth century in the West.

EVIDENCE

Evidence for Weber's views on the significance of Protestantism is found in an examination of those countries with mixed religious systems like Germany. In looking at these countries, he discovers that the leaders of the economic system – business leaders, owners of capital, high-grade skilled labour and more advanced technically and commercially trained personnel – are all overwhelmingly Protestant. Likewise in the vocational training and commercial schools, the pupils are overwhelmingly Protestant.

COMPARISON WITH CHINA AND INDIA

In support of his stand on the role of Protestantism in the development of capitalism, he makes comparison between the West, and China and India. China had the prerequisites for the development of capitalism. There was a tradition of intense acquisitiveness and unscrupulous competition.

There was great industry and enormous capacity for work in the populace. Powerful guilds existed. And there was a steady growth in precious metals. Despite these and other material prerequisites, capitalism did not arise in China. It was mainly due to the lack of the required "mentality", the lack of the needed idea system. These were two dominant systems of religious ideas in China - Confucianism" and Taoism. Both of them had such idea systems that were not favourable in any way to the formation of capitalism.

Confucianism: Confucianism laid stress on literary education and not on economy or economic activities. The goal of the people was then only administrative job and social status. Confucianism adjusted its idea system to the prevailing goal and oriented its preachings and principles to the same. As the literary education was the prerequisite for office and social status, it placed emphasis on literary education. The economy or economic activities did not receive its attention. Further as there was no idea of salvation in Confucianism as in Calvinism, it had no ground to preach work as a means of salvation. Indeed it taught its followers to accept things as they were and not to work for salvation. It was not regarded for Confucian gentleman to work, although wealth was prized. Active engagement in a profitable enterprise was regarded as morally dubious and unbecoming to Confucian's station. The acceptable goal for such a gentleman was a good position, not high profits. Thrift was also disapproved for the Confucian gentleman. He was urged to reject thrift, because it was something that the commoners practised.

Taoism: Taoism was also a chip of the same block as the Confucianism was. It also did not urge its followers to aim at economic success and work towards it. It was essentially traditional and one of its basic tenets was "Do not introduce innovation". Such an idea system was unlikely to motivate the followers to much innovative action and to produce any major changes, let alone, one as far-reaching as capitalism.

Hinduism: Hinduism in India sailed in the same boat as Confucianism was. Its ethos also was not in favour of work. It emphasized a highly literary kind of education. Above all, its key idea was reincarnation (*punarjanmam*), which can be compared to the Christian belief in predestination. To a Hindu, a person occupies a station in his life because of his deeds *(karma)* in a previous life. It could not be altered, but salvation could be obtained in the next life, by virtue of a faithful adherence to the ritualistic rules of duty (*dharma)* prescribed by the religion. For Hinduism, activity in this world is not important, but only the faithful adherence to the ritualistic rules of duty. In these and other ways, the idea system associated with Hinduism failed to produce the kind of people who could create a capitalist economic system.

Weber admits that a type of capitalism existed in China, India and during the Middle Ages. But it was different from Western capitalism, primarily because it lacked the 'economic ethos'.

CONCLUSION

Though Weber thinks that Protestantism, particularly Calvinism was a crucial factor in the rise of capitalism in the West, he does not think that it is indispensable for the continuation of capitalism. Weber thinks that even without Calvinism, the modern capitalism can continue.

Another crucial point here is that Calvanists did not consciously seek to create capitalism. In Weber's view, capitalism was an unanticipated consequence of the Protestant ethic. The Protestant ethic was intended to shape and direct the behaviour of people especially in the economic sphere. The development of capitalism occurred as an unexpected consequence.

KEY WORDS

Predestination: A doctrine which holds that at birth every soul is predetermined for heaven or hell.

Protestant ethic: An economic ethic or idea system prescribed by Protestantism for hard work, rejection of life pleasures, thrift and saving.

Spirit of Capitalism: Spirit for hard work, thrift and savings which are prerequisites for capitalism.

CLASS, STATUS AND POWER

According to Karl Marx, the division of society into strata is formed along a single dimension, that is economic dimension. Marx believes that throughout the history, the society is virtually divided into two classes, namely, the propertied class and propertyless class, formed on the basis of ownership and non-ownership of property that comprises the means of material production. But Weber contends that Marx oversimplifies the image of stratification. He says that the society is not divided on single dimension, as Marx claims. It has as well, besides classes formed on the basis of economic dimension, divisions based upon the dimensions of prestige and power. He takes a multi-dimensional view of stratification and identifies three components *Class* (economic), *status group* (prestige) and *party* (power).

CLASS

According to Marx, every society is economically conditioned and built on the mode of production which comprises two elements, namely, means (forces) of production and relations of production. As the means of production are owned and controlled by a privileged few and the rest go without the ownership of means of production, the relations between the two crystallize into two classes, namely those who own capital, the bourgeoisie and those without ownership of the means of production, the proletariat. Marx thus predicts that there would virtually be two social classes formed with reference to the people's relationship to the means of production.

But Weber differs from Marx and foresees the development of several social classes on the economic dimension. Weber argues that class refers to economic inequality. But he relates it to income. In his view, class is an income phenomenon and cannot be narrowed down to means of production. He defines class as a 'group of people who share the same

position in economic life, whether this involves property, as in Marx's definition, or marketable skills' (Ruth Wallace and Alison Wolf). Weber considers income the determinant of the economic position. It may be obtained from property or marketable skills. The source does not matter. What is obtained from the source does matter. It is income. What the people get, in Weber's view is the source of economic position, and not what the people have. Property or marketable skills refer to what the people *have*, whereas income refers to the amount of money people *get*. Whether the individuals derive their income from property or from marketable skills, depending upon the level of income, their economic position is formed.

On the count of income, economic inequality does not constitute neat categories, but a continuum from high to low. There will be several classes based on the differences in income levels. In Weber's view, not all workers constitute a single, compact, homogeneous class as there are differences among them in income level; some workers command more income than others. Again, their income level may be equal to that of some property owners. With respect to the relationship to property, they may remain apart. But with respect to income level, they sail in the same boat.

Weber is convinced that a class shares not only an economic position, but also an economic drive in the possession of goods and opportunities. As the income is the causal component of such drive, naturally with the variation in income level, there will be variation in economic drive between the different classes.

STATUS

Marx views class as a status group. Each class has a social standing. The social honour or prestige is determined by the ownership of property. So, naturally the propertied class enjoys a greater social honour, respect and admiration in the society. The propertyless class is down with low status.

But Weber says that social honour is not achieved simply by the ownership of the property or income or a skill. Rather, it derives from a

mode of life practised by a group in society. Weber cites the caste system of India which provides a good example of status groups. Certain castes are distinguished from others by their mode of life consisting in exclusive practices, for example, their own rituals, dietary habits, manners, marriage customs. They may be propertied or propertyless, yet they have high status as the economically ascendant class. An upper caste propertyless man has the same status as that of a middle class propertied man.

Weber also cites the status group system of classical China to press his point that status is independent of property or income. In classical China, the highly advanced scholars, the literati were the dominant status group. Other groups such as rich merchants had a good amount of wealth. Yet the wealth did not guarantee them either high social honour or power to run the society. With a view to having equal status with the literati, they tried to adopt the general life style of the literati and endeavoured to associate with the literati by encouraging their wards and relatives to pass the necessary examinations. Among the literati also, there were wealthy elements. So to say, most of them were recruited from wealthy land-owning families.

POWER

Marx's argument is that relationship to the property brings forth not only status but also power. He considers the relationship to the means of production the source of power in the society. By means of ownership of means of production, a man can have possibility or opportunity to impose his will upon others even against their resistance. With the economic power in his hands, he can wield power over others in various spheres of life. For Marx, power derives solely from the relationship to private property of the means of production.

But Weber does not agree with Marx on this point. He accepts that power has the economic base and the economic power is the predominant power in the society. But, he argues, power is not to be seen exclusively as economic power, because power emerges from different sources. There

are political, social and religious powers as well and they play a crucial role in determining the social status of a person. A person having power derived from one base may not have power from another source. A person who has economic power (e.g. a landlord) may not have religious power and a person having religious power (e.g. a temple priest) may not have economic power.

CONCLUSION

In sum, Weber disagrees with Marx over the question of nexus between class, status and power. Marx's view is that society rests on economic base, being vertically divided into just two classes, formed on the basis of ownership or non-ownership of means of production. A person's identity is derived only from the class to which he belongs. So also the status and power a person can have are determined by the class. So outside class, one cannot have status and power.

But Weber's argument is that status and power are independent of economic relations. They derive from several bases apart from economic base. The status or power deriving from one base need not correspond to the status or power deriving from another base. In other words, class, status and power do not go together. As a result, social stratification is not formed on a single dimension, that is, economic dimension as Marx claims. It is formed also on status and power dimensions; the society is divided into status groups and parties (Weber uses "parties" to refer to power groups) apart from classes based on economic inequality.

Weber concludes that any dimension, inequality does not constitute neat categories, but a continuum from high to low. Individuals or groups vary in several degrees on one dimension.

KEY WORDS

Income: Amount of money people get.

Class: A group of people who share the same position in economic life (Weber).

Status: A person's position in the society relative to other persons.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The methodological tool Weber suggests for understanding of a social phenomenon is

   (A) Intuition

   (B) Ideal type

   (C) Concept

   (D) Concrete instances

2. Charismatic authority is derived from

   (A) Tradition

   (B) Laws

   (C) Inheritance

   (D) Individual personality

3. Weber attributes the development of modern capitalism in the West to

   (A) Protestant ethic

   (B) Reformation

   (C) Industrial Revolution

   (D) *Laissez-faire* policy

4. Describe the uses of ideal type in the study of social phenomena.
5. Describe the methodology suggested by Weber for causal analysis.
6. Describe the characteristics of causal relationship as pointed out by Weber.
7. Describe the characteristics of social action and distinguish its types.
8. Describe the three kinds of authority classified by Weber.
9. Examine the role of Protestantism in the rise of modern capitalism in the West.
10. Contrast the views of Weber with those of Marx on social stratification.

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UNIT - V

EMILE DURKHEIM

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) was born on 15th April 1858 in Epinal in the north-eastern province of Lorraine, France. As his father and ancestors were rabbis (Jewish priests), his father wanted him to become a rabbi in accordance with the family tradition. Accordingly he was given education and training in Hebrew language and Jewish religious texts of old Testament and Talmud.

Nevertheless formal education was not denied to him. First he was admitted in an institution called College d' of Epinal. Then he joined Lycee Louis-le-Grand for high school studies. After completing his studies there, he joined Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris for graduate study. His admission in the Ecole marked a turning point in his life. Even though the curriculum taught in the Ecole was least interesting, he had an opportunity to come into association with the noted intellectuals of the period such as Fustel de Coulanges, Emile Boutrouse, Henri Bergson, Jean Jaures, Pierre Janet and Coblot. This association fostered in him a zeal for knowledge in the history, sociology and philosophy.

After graduating from the Ecole, he went to Germany and joined the psychological laboratory set up by Wilhelm Max Wundt at Leipzig and underwent training in psychological research methods. Side by side, he learnt social sciences as well and acquired proficiency in them. Upon the completion of the training, he returned to Paris and joined Paris University for Ph.D. work. In 1873, he received Ph.D. degree for his thesis on "The Division of Labour in Society".

In 1887, he got a faculty position in the department of philosophy at the University of Bordeaux to teach sociology and education. It was during his tenure there that his marriage with Louise Dreyfus took place. Further

his research work became very active at that time. He brought out a number of publications. The noteworthy among them were *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895) and *The Suicide* (1897). In 1896, he became full professor at Bordeaux.

In 1989, he founded *L'annee sociologique*, for many years the leading journal of sociological thought and research in France. The journal brought out his thoughts and ideas in black and white.

In 1902, he quit Bordeaux University and joined the Faculty of Paris University situated at Sorbonne as teacher in education. When the First World War broke out in 1914, he joined the military service. The defeat of France and the unexpected death of his only son in the War dealt a shocking blow to his spirits and health. On 15th November 1917, his life on the earth came to an end.

SOCIAL FACTS

Durkheim holds a view that sociology can have a clear and separate identity only when its subject matter is specific and distinct from the subject matter of other sciences. For this he suggests 'social facts' as the subject matter of sociology. By social facts, he means the specific aspects of social life.

Durkheim wants that sociology be a specialized science like other natural sciences. He realizes that sociology could not become so, as long as it keeps to have overall claim upon the totality of social life. It is only if it renounces such overall claim and studies the specific aspects of social life or specific social actions or specific events that it can become a specialized science. So, he insists upon the study of specific social phenomena which he calls social facts. To make the concept clear, he defines social facts as "ways of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual and endowed with the power of coercion by reason of which they control them". In other words, he includes in the concept of social facts only those specific aspects of behaviour that are *external to* and *coercive of the actor.*

When an aspect is external to the actor, it means that it is a thing - an object. Durkheim's concept of social facts indicates that social factors are things; in other words, they are to be treated as things. This implication helps separate sociology from philosophy. In that they are to be treated as *things*, social factors are to be studied empirically, *not* philosophically. Durkheim believes that ideas can be known introspectively (philosophically), but things "cannot be conceived by purely mental activity"; they require for their conception "data from outside the mind".

The implication of the concept of social facts that they are *things*, also helps to counter the threat from psychology in dealing with them. As long

as social facts are things external to and coercive of the actor, Durkheim argues, they cannot be reduced to psychological facts. Psychological facts are closely internal (inherited), but social facts are external and coercive. By defining a social fact as the thing that is external to and coercive of the actor, Durkheim seems to have done a reasonably good job' of attaining his objective of separating sociology from both philosophy and psychology.

CHARACTERISTICS

Exteriority

By treating social facts as things, Durkheim attributes certain characteristics to the same. First, being things, social facts are external to the individual. They would have been internalized by the individual and embodied in their individual consciousness. Yet they are independent of his consciousness. They are external to him. For example, domestic, civil or contractual obligations, religious beliefs, values and practices would have been internalized by the individual.

But they are external to him. They are defined in laws, customs and religion. Even if the individual feels such realities subjectively and conforms his sentiments, such realities are objective in so far as the individual did not create them. They exist prior to his birth. He finds them readymade at birth and learns through the process of socialization. Since these social phenomena exist prior to the individual and have an objective reality, they are external to the individual; they come to him from without.

Constraint

The other characteristics of social fact is that it is endowed with *coercive power* by virtue of which it imposes itself upon the individual independent of his will. Since the social fact is both real and external, it forms part of individual environment like the physical and biological parts of his environment and exerts upon him a certain constraint. Because of this constraint, we conform to social facts. We drive vehicles to the left of the road, attend to calls of nature in a specified manner and cover our bodies with a certain amount of clothing. These we do, not because we

choose to do so, but because it is obligatory for us to do so. As long as we conform to social facts, their constraint is not felt. It is only in attempts at violation that we realize the constraint or coercive power of social facts. When laws, conventions or mores are offended, public consciousness arises and exercises a check on it. Ridicule, punishment and social ostracism emerge as checks and demonstrate the coercive power of social facts.

Durkheim concedes that to define the social facts in terms of constraint and coercion is to "risk the zealous partisans of absolute individualism": In his view individualism is not more important when considering society's interests. He disagrees with the advocates of individualism who declare that there would be great happiness if each individual works in his self-interest. He says that individual's interests and society's interests do not coincide. For social order, it is necessary for society to exercise some control or constraint upon its members.

Durkheim argues that any social reality is born out of association of individuals. But once it is established and institutionalized, it becomes above and apart from the individuals. Likewise, social facts, though born out of association of individuals, become above and apart from the individuals. In defence of this doctrine, Durkheim adduces four types of evidence. The first is the alleged heterogeneity of individual and collective states of mind. Though the individuals are separate and heterogeneous, they have collective states of mind. In a time of national danger, the intensity of collective feeling of patriotism is much greater than that of individual feeling. Similarly the individual's hesitant and vague condemnation of dishonesty is said to stand in marked contrast to the "unreserved, explicit and categorical disgrace with which society strikes at theft in all its forms".

A second type of evidence is the difference in individual attitudes and behaviour which results from the group situation. In a crowd the individual thinks, feels and acts in a different fashion. This shows that a new reality must have been created by association of individuals and that this reality

reacts upon the feelings and behaviour of the individuals and changes them.

A third type of evidence in supplied by the uniformities of social statistics. Many types of social facts like crimes, marriages and suicides show a surprising degree of numerical consistency from year to year, either remaining virtually unchanged or maintaining a uniform rate of change. Though they are connected with the individuals, such uniformities, Durkheim argues, could not derive from the personal motives or characteristics of individuals which are so variable as to comprise only a varying distribution.

A fourth type of evidence is drawn from analogy with the relationship between chemical elements and the substance which is composed of the combination of them. When the chemical elements combine and thereby produce, by the fact of their combination, a new phenomenon, it is plain that the new phenomenon resides not in its original elements, but in the totality formed by their union. Likewise, society emerges out of collocation and interaction of individual minds. Yet it remains above and apart from the individuals just as the whole is greater than its parts.

TYPES OF SOCIAL FACTS

Material and Non-material Social Facts

Being external, social fact is collective and general. Being collective, it exercises a constraint on the individuals who form a given society. The nature of social facts does not end with these. Durkheim differentiates between two broad types of social facts – material and non-material. *Material facts* are the clearer of the two because they are material entities. Architecture and the law are two examples of material social facts. *Non-material social facts* are also external and coercive, but they are not so clear-out. To some extent, they are found in the minds of actors. He cites norms of values as examples of non-material social facts. They are, in part, mental phenomena, but they are of a different order from the mental concerns of psychology.

Of the two kinds of social facts, Durkheim gives importance to material facts. He believes that the material social facts reflect the nature of and changes in non-material social facts. So, in order to study non-material social facts, scientifically, he feels, the sociologist will have to seek and examine material social facts that reflect their nature.

Normal and Pathological Social Facts

Durkheim makes a further distinction - an important distinction - in terms of normal and pathological social facts. A social fact is *normal* when it is generally encountered in society of a certain type and has utility for that societal type. As an illustration, he cites the case of crime. We consider crime as pathological. But Durkheim argues that though we may consider crime as immoral because it flouts values we believe in, from a scientific point of view, it would be incorrect to call it abnormal. Firstly, because crime is found not only in majority of societies of one particular type but in all societies of all types. Secondly, if there were not occasional deviations or floutings of norms, there would be no change in human behaviour and equally important, no opportunities would arise for a society to either affirm the existing norms or else reassess such behaviour and modify the norm itself. To show that crime is useful to the normal evolution of morality and law, Durkheim cites the case of Socrates (B.C. 471 – 399) who, according to Athenian law, was a criminal, his 'crime' being the independence of his thought. But his 'crime' rendered a service to his country because it served to prepare a new morality and faith which the Athenians needed. It also rendered a service to humanity in the sense that freedom of thought enjoyed by people in many countries today was made possible by people like him.

Now a question arises as to how a social fact becomes abnormal or *pathological*. When the rate of crime exceeds what is more or less constant for a given societal type, then it becomes an abnormal or pathological fact. Similarly, using the same criteria, suicide is a normal social fact (though it may be regarded as 'wrong' or 'immoral' because it goes against a set of values that makes the preservation of life absolute). But when there is

a sudden rise in suicide rate at a given time, it is a pathological social fact and a cause of concern.

Durkheim shows interest in the study of both normal and pathological social facts. He believes that the study of both types of social facts will help identify the nature of social facts. He gets this idea from the study of medicine. The doctors study the normal working of the body and pathological features. The study of both these features helps one identify the nature of the body. Durkheim applies this method to the study of social facts.

6.1.1 KEY WORDS

Material social fact: A social fact which is explicitly and clearly observable.

Non-material social fact: A social fact which is not explicitly clear, but can be understood from the actions in which it expresses itself.

Normal social fact: A social fact which is generally encountered in a society of certain type.

Pathological social fact: A social fact which exceeds the normal level and produces abnormal consequences.

Social fact: A specific social phenomenon or a specific social action. In Durkheim's view, it is external to and coercive of individuals.

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

COLLECTIVITY

Many social theories take individual as the starting point in their analysis of society. They explain the social phenomena in terms of the individual tendencies and dispositions. But Durkheim rejects the theories of society built upon 'will'. 'desire' or 'volition' of the individual and holds that the individual tendencies or actin derive from the collective nature of a social group of society.

Durkheim agrees that without individuals, there is no collectivity. Collectivity, that is, society, emerges out of the collocation and interaction of individuals. But once it is established, it remains above and apart from the individuals. A chemical substance is composed of the combination of elements. When the chemical elements combine, by the fact of their combination, a new phenomenon is produced. Likewise an organism is formed by an association of molecules. However, the chemical substance or the organism is above and apart from the constituent elements. The whole is not reducible to properties of the constituent elements. So also society is formed by association of individuals. But it emerges as a distinct reality, having a nature peculiar to itself. Its nature is different from individual nature. It transcends the properties of the individuals. It surpasses the individual materially, because it is the coalition of all the individual forces.

The society surpasses the individual not only materially but also morally. It acts as the moral authority and exercises constraint upon the individual. By means of its "moral rules" it regulates the conduct of the individual and provides him with "determinate goals".

MORAL AUTHORITY

In Durkheim's view, regulation of human conduct by an external authority is essential considering the tendencies and dispositions of the individuals. Individuals are the creatures whose desires are unlimited. They are not like other animals, because they are never satisfied even if their biological needs are fulfilled. Durkheim says that man's wants go on increasing since satisfaction obtained only stimulates instead of fulfilling wants. It follows from the natural instability of the human animal that his desires can only be held in check by external control, that is, by social control. Society tries to impose limit on human desires and constitutes a regular force for his desires and needs. The individual conforms to the limits with the result that his desires or ambitions do not go beyond the limits.

Here Durkheim concedes that constraint and coercion exercised by the society may militate against the 'absolute individualism'. The individual may be deprived of his personal freedom or liberty in the face of societal constraint and regulation. In Durkheim's view, individulism is not more important when considering the society's interest. For the sake of society's interest, there is nothing wrong in sacrificing the individual interest. Durkheim declares that a society composed of unregulated and unorganised individuals constitutes a veritable sociological monstrosity. In order to avert such a situation, the individuals must sacrifice their personal interests and contribute to the social order.

Durkheim stresses that individuals must submit to some sort of inconvenience or sacrifice without which social life would be impossible. The individual interest and society's interest do not coincide. As the latter is more important, the individuals must not mind sacrificing their personal interests. It is only upon their being prepared to sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of society's interest that social life will be possible.

By submitting to the social control, man not only contributes to the social life but also gains a personal advantage. "Through the practice of

moral rules, we develop the capacity to govern and regulate ourselves which is the whole reality of liberty" (Robert Bisbet). Above all, he receives protection from the immoral and amoral forces that best him: " . . . it is these same rules, that, thanks to the authority and forces vested in them protect us from immoral and amoral forces besetting us on every hand" (Nisbet).

Durkheim adds that man is complete only to the extent that "we feel identified with those groups in which we are involved". A man can identify himself with his group only in so far as he conforms to the collective conscience of the group and adheres to its norms and values. Such identification with the group enables him to become complete.

The moral authority the society has over the individuals provides it venerable respect. The ideas, beliefs, sentiments, etc., which society imposes upon individuals are marked out for respect. Since such ideas, beliefs, moral rules, etc. are upheld by the collectivity, the flouting of the same by the individual is liable to invite social action or punishment. Should any idea, belief or moral code happen to receive treatment as a sacred thing, the societal reaction for the flouting of the same will be severe. There are always rules of conduct which prescribe how man should behave in relation to sacred things.

Society does not confine itself to demanding sacrifices or efforts from individuals. It does not act upon individuals wholly from outside. Its force, that is, collective conscience penetrates the individuals and organizes itself within them. Thus it becomes an integral part of the individual consciousness. This is the reason that the behaviour of the individuals reflects the societal beliefs, morals, rules, etc.

KEY WORDS

Collectivity: A group formed by collocation and interaction of individuals.

Collective conscience: Refers to the totality of ideas, beliefs and sentiments common to average members of a collectivity, say society (Durkheim).

THEORY OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE

In each society, the social life involves solidarity among the people. The solidarity is expressed through collective conscience. Durkheim describes collective conscience as "body of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society". These common beliefs and sentiments form a 'system in their own right'. The system is spread over the whole territory of society. It is common to all occupations or professions, etc. Even though it can be realized through the individuals, it operates independently as a distinct reality. It remains external to the individuals and imposes itself upon them.

Thus the collective conscience, that is, common system of beliefs and sentiments, solidifies the people and keeps them together. It persists through time and links generations to one another. Depending upon the strength of collective conscience, the extent of social solidarity is formed. In other words, depending upon the similarities in beliefs and sentiments, the extent or degree of social solidarity is formed. Where the similarities are greater and closer, social solidarity is stronger. Where the similarities are lesser and thinner, social solidarity may not be as strong as the social solidarity prevailing in the former case. Yet it remains as a reality there.

TYPES OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

In this respect, Durkheim classifies social solidarity into two types: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity.

Mechanical Solidarity

Where the similarities in beliefs and sentiments are greater the social solidarity arising from them is known as *mechanical solidarity*. It is a solidarity of resemblance. It results from the people being like one another and remaining undifferentiated in mental and moral aspects of life. Such

solidarity characterizes the archaic societies (primitive societies as they were once called). They are homogeneous, mentally and morally; they feel the same emotions, cherish the same values and hold the same things sacred. Thus collective conscience envelops wholly the conscience of individuals and coincides in all points with it. Because of this undifferentiated state, the society is coherent and solid.

But people, argues Durkheim, subscribe to the common beliefs and share the common sentiments because of the force of collective conscience. In archaic societies, the law is *repressive*. It does not permit or tolerate any act against collective conscience since it is upon it that the society rests. It enjoins upon the individual members to go by the collective conscience. Offence against collective conscience is regarded as a crime and met with swift, severe punishment. The theft of a pig must lead to the cutting off of the offender's hands; blaspheming against god or gods might well result in the removal of one's tongue. So, under the threat of punishment, people adhere - so to say, are forced to - to collective beliefs, customs, ways of living, etc. There is no question of choice in the adherence to the collective conscience. Anyhow the result is that the society is coherent and solid.

Organic Solidarity

But in the modern, advanced societies, collective conscience, is not so strong. There are differences between the individuals. They are no longer similar, but different. They do not have mental or moral similarities; they have different ideas and tendencies and diverse personalities. They are free to believe, to desire and to act according to their own or their group preferences in various circumstances. Thus the sphere of influence of collective conscience is reduced.

Unlike in the archaic societies, in the advanced societies, the legal system does not force the individual members to be uniform in their behaviour. It gives freedom of action to the individuals. Durkheim describes the nature of law in the advanced societies as *restitutive law*. Its nature

is mild and liberal. It does not react harshly to the breaches. Instead of being severely punished for even seemingly minor offences against the collective conscience, individuals in this more modern type of society are simply asked to comply with the law or to repay–make restitution to – those who have been harmed by their actions.

Notwithstanding the differences, Durkheim says, the advanced societies maintain social solidarity. He argues that unless there is some source of solidarity in a society characterised by differences, it is bound to degenerate and decay. So, in the advanced societies, to keep the people together, division of functions are divided into different tasks and distributed among the people. Under such system of division of labour, people get the tasks which are narrow in range and become specialized in them by repetitive performance. In such a condition, a group specialized in a specific narrow-ranging tasks cannot be self-sufficient. It needs the services of other people in order to survive. So it has to live in interdependence and cooperation with others. Thus, the modern society is held together because of the division of labour.

CONCLUSION

Durkheim considers the two types of solidarity not as distinct, separate things. He considers them as stages in the evolution of the structure of society. The human society is first in the stage of mechanical solidarity. In the primitive society people occupy very general positions in which they perform a wide variety of tasks and handle a large number of responsibilities. With the increase in *dynamic density*, that is, increase in the number of people in the society and the interaction among them, a transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity occurs. The increase in dynamic density brings about more competition for the resources which are scarce and a more intense struggle – for survival among the various identical components of society. Because individuals, groups families, tribes and so forth perform virtually identical functions there is a greater pressure on them. The individuals are likely to clash over these functions, especially if resources are scarce. Hence a need arises

to divide the existing functions into different tasks so that all components (individuals and collectivities) can have a certain function each for their survival. The rise of division of labour allows people and the structures they create, to complement, rather than conflict with, one another and this, in turn, makes peaceful co-existence more likely. The people live in interdependence and cooperation with one another. Such a stage Durkheim calls organic solidarity.

KEY WORDS

Dynamic density: Increase in the number of people and in interaction among them.

Mechanical solidarity: A condition within collectivity in which people live in cohesion and cooperation under free, natural conditions.

Repressive law: Law that punishes the wrong-doer to re-establish power and authority of the collectivity.

Restitutive law: Law that appears to be not keen about punishment, but about restitution or reform. Its function is not to avenge but rather to restore to the wronged person what he or she has lost.

Social solidarity: The condition within the collectivity in which there is social cohesion and cooperation and a collective action is directed towards the achievement of the common goals.

DIVISION OF LABOUR

IN PRIMITIVE SOCIETY

According to Durkheim, social life is based on two sources, namely, (1) similarity of consciousness, and (2) division of labour. In the primitive society, social life is based on similarity of consciousness. People are homogeneous mentally and morally; they feel the same emotions, cherish the same values and hold the same things sacred. Durkheim refers to such situation as mechanical solidarity.

IN MODERN SOCIETY

But in the modern, advanced society, people are no longer homogeneous. They do not have mental or moral similarities; they have different ideas and tendencies and diverse personalities. They are free to believe, to desire and to act according to their own or their group preferences in various circumstances. Yet they live in solidarity which Durkheim calls organic solidarity. The source of this solidarity is division of labour.

In the primitive society, the social structure is relatively undifferentiated with little or no division of labour. people tend to occupy very general positions in which they perform a wide variety of tasks and handle a very large number of responsibilities. In other words, a primitive man tends to be a jack-of-all trades. Even though he performs a single function, it tends to be general and to encompass a wide variety of tasks. For example, being a mother-housewife in primitive society is a more general position. She tends to perform a number of tasks, namely, cooking, dishwashing, cleaning, laundering, producing groceries, fetching water, etc. apart from child care.

But in the modern society, the social structure is differentiated with a greater or more refined division of labour. People tend to occupy more

specialized positions and have a much narrow range of tasks and responsibilities. The function performed by an individual tends to be specific and to involve very few tasks. For instance, a mother-housewife in modern society does not perform a wide variety of tasks as her counterpart in the primitive society does. Laundry services, diaper services, home delivery and labour-saving devices (pressure cookers, microwave ovens, cusinarts, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, grinders and so forth) perform a number of tasks that were formerly the responsibility of the mother-housewife.

As the functions in the modern society are specific and have a narrow range, the functionaries are not self-sufficient. In such a condition, in order to survive, a functionary needs the services of other people for which he has to live in interdependence and cooperation with others. It is because of the division of labour that the people need to depend upon others and to live in cooperation with them.

CAUSE OF DIVISION OF LABOUR

Durkheim attributes the rise of division of labour to the increase in *dynamic density*, that is, increase in the number of people in the society and in the interaction among them. As long as the number of people and the interaction among them is limited, the economic resources available will be sufficient for them and there will be no intense competition. But with the increase in population, more people come into contact with one another; they compete for the scarce resources and there is intense rivalry among the various identical components of the society – individuals, groups and so forth. This necessitates introduction of a mechanism to manage the situation of competition and rivalry among the people and keep them together.

Division of labour comes to the aid for this purpose. The existing functions are divided into different tasks and distributed among the components of the society so that they all can have a certain function each for their survival. As each man gets specific task under division of labour,

he is no longer in competition with others. The businessman does not struggle with the priest, nor the physician with the engineer, nor the carpenter with the manager. Thus the division of labour allows people to complement, rather than conflict with one another.

When the dynamic density goes on increasing, division of labour becomes more complex and the individuals tend to be more differentiated from each other because of specialization. However, in this process, there is a growing interdependence and cooperation between individuals.

KEY WORD

Division of labour: A function being broken into a number of tasks and distributed among people.

SUICIDE

Suicide is considered by most people to be a private and personal act and therefore the province of the psychologist. Yet Durkheim chooses to study suicide. He believes that if sociology can play a role in explaining such a seemingly individualistic act as suicide, sociology could gain a recognition in the academic world.

NON-SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

Durkheim sees suicide as a *sociological* phenomenon. a social fact. He does not consider it as an action caused by personal weakness, psychological frustration or other personal or economic or family factors. He rejects the psychological theory which associates suicide with depression or any other psychological frustration. Durkheim argues that the psychological factors are the resultant of social conditions. The social conditions influence the mind and condition its working. Hence suicide is related to social conditions and not to psychological factors. He says that "the relations of suicide to certain states of social environment are direct and constant".

In the same vein, Durkheim examines and rejects the imitation theory associated with the early French psychologist Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904). The imitation theory argues that people commit suicide because they are imitating actions of others who have committed suicide. This social-psychological approach to sociological thinking is foreign to Durkheim's focus on social facts. He rejects it. He reasons that if imitation were truly important, we should find that the nations that border on a country with a high suicide rate should themselves have high rates. He looks at the data on the significance of this geographical factor and concludes that no such relationship exists. Durkheim admits that some individual suicides may be the result of imitation, but it is a minor factor that it has no significant effect on the overall suicide rate. In the end,

Durkhiem rejects imitation as significant factor because of his view that one social fact could only be the cause of another social fact. Because imitation is a social-psychological variable, it cannot, in his system, serve as a significant cause of difference in social suicide rates. As Durkheim puts it, "The social suicide-rate can be explained only sociologically".

DEFINITION

Durkheim begins his sociological treatment of suicide with a comprehensive definition. "The term suicide", he says, "refers to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from the positive or negative acts of the victim himself who knows the result they produce". The positive act is exemplified by shooting oneself in the temple or hanging oneself. The negative act may be remaining in a burning building, or refusing all nourishment to the point of starvation, or fasting unto death, or self-immolation.

SOCIAL CURRENTS

For the causal explanations of suicide, Durkheim develops a concept known as "social currents". These are non-material social facts but without a crystallized form. He gives as examples the great movements of enthusiasm or indignation in a crowd, altruism or egoism. The social currents are produced by social conditions. Yet they are social facts. They are less concrete. Nevertheless they are social facts having the same objectivity and the same ascendancy over the individuals as other social facts. "They come to each one of us from without and can carry us away. . .".

TYPES OF SUICIDE

Durkheim says that social currents play a crucial role in the etiology of suicide. They affect the individuals and cause them to commit suicide. The social currents are produced by the social conditions. In this respect, he makes particular reference to two social conditions, namely, integration and regulation as the sources of social currents. On the basis of these two social conditions and the social currents flowing from them, he classifies

four types of suicide – *egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic.* He links each of these types of suicide to the degree of integration into, or regulation by, society. *Integration* refers to the degree of which collective sentiments are shared. Altruistic suicide is associated with a high degree of integration and egoistic suicide, with a low degree of integration. *Regulation* refers to the degree of external constraint on people. Fatalistic suicide is associated with high regulation and anomic suicide, with low regulation. Whitney Pope offers a summary of the four types of suicide discussed by Durkheim. He does this by interrelating high and low degrees of integration and regulation in the following way:

Egoistic Suicide

Egoistic suicide refers to the lack of integration of the individual into his collectivity or group. Durkheim says that lack of integration of the individuals into the collectivity exists in societies where the collective conscience is weak. Where the collective conscience is weak, it creates a current of egoism in the individuals. The individuals overlook the collective conscience and pursue their interests in whatever way they wish. Such unrestrained egoism is likely to alienate them from others. In such condition, they depend only on themselves for the satisfaction of their needs. But all needs cannot be fulfilled by themselves and those that are fulfilled simply lead to the generation of more and more needs and ultimately, to dissatisfaction – and for some, to suicide (Breault).

Durkheim, says that in strongly integrated collectivities, the suicide rate is less. When the individuals are fully integrated into their collectivities, they get adequate care, protection and help; their needs are also adequately fulfilled. As a result, there is no dissatisfaction and no room for committing suicide.

By using the recorded data on the various instances of suicide in various regions of France and Central Europe, Durkheim cites a number of instances to show that suicide rate is less in the strongly integrated cases than in the cases with little or no integration. Catholics, for example,

regardless of race and nationality, show far less suicide rate than the Protestants. This is because, while both faiths prohibit suicide, Catholicism, is able to integrate its members more fully into its fold. It encourages strong social ties and group conformity and prohibits variation. But Protestantism permits individual freedom of thought and action as evidenced by the existence of multiple cults and prevalence of fewer common beliefs and practices. Thus "the superiority of Protestantism with respect to suicide results from its being a less strongly integrated church than the Catholic church".

Durkheim points out that as per the recorded data, suicide rates are higher among the wealthy than among the poor. This is because the wealthy are less integrated. They have a far wider range of personal choice. But, the poor people, on the other hand, are more socially integrated. They have less freedom; their freedom is limited by poverty.

Durkheim notices that suicide rates are in general higher among the males than among the females. He explains this differential in terms of the differences in social integration between the males and females. Males are more independent; they are not bound to others by closer ties of affection and obligation. But women are less independent. They are more mindful of the expectations of others and have greater emotional attachments with others. Hence suicide rates are less among them.

Durkheim tries to prove his point by citing the family also. Family, like religious group, is a powerful protective force against self-destruction. While non-marriage cases have greater suicide rate, the family reduces the suicide rate by half or more. The single persons have a higher suicide rate than the family persons. The widows and widowers stand with the single persons in this respect and outstrip the family members in suicide rate. As married persons are bound to others by marriage and family responsibilities, they have a reason to live, while the unmarried and single persons are not bound to others by such ties of affection and obligation.

The immunity from suicide increases with the density of the family. Durkheim points out that contrary to the popular belief that suicide is due to life's burdens, it diminishes as these burdens increase. Suicide cases are more in the small families and they decrease with the increase in the size of family. Small families have fewer attachments; their sentiments and consciences lack intensity. But large families have greater attachments and are solidly integrated. They provide stable protection and support to the members and act as powerful safeguards against suicide. It is for this reason that suicide rate is less in them.

Again contrary to the common belief that great political unheavals and popular wars increase the number of suicides, Durkheim contends that great social disturbances and wars rouse collective sentiments and lead to a more powerful integration of the individuals into the community, thus reducing the rate of suicide. It is actually upon the cessation of disturbances and wars that suicide rate registers a sudden increase. According to Durkheim, during war, there is a greater cohesiveness in social relations and a sense of common purpose among the people. War rouses collective sentiments, stimulates patriotism and forces men to close ranks and to confront the danger, leading to a strong integration of the members into the community. But with the stoppage of war, the social condition radically alters. The compulsion to remain integrated goes off. They are no longer attached with one another. They become free to do what they like. This sudden disintegration of life leads to big rise in the incidence of suicide.

By these examples, Durkheim tries to show that in cases where there is lack of integration or disintegration, the condition leads to suicide. As the individuals are left isolated, the current of egoism affects them, causing them to commit suicide. When society is strongly integrated, the individuals cling to life more resolutely so as not to betrary interests they put before their own. "The bond that unites them with the common cause attaches them to life and the lofty goal they envisage prevents their feeling personal troubles so deeply. There is in short, in a cohesive and animated society

a constant interchange of ideas and feelings from all to each and each to all, something like a mutual moral support, which instead of throwing individual on his own resources, leads him to share in the collective energy and supports his own when exhausted" (Robert Nisbet). When the society is weakly integrated or becomes disintegrated, it loses its control over the individuals. It is no longer able to retain them in their duty. As it is unable to provide any support or care for them in such condition, it has no authority over them; and conscious of its own weakness, it even recognizes their right to do freely what it can no longer prevent, that is, self-destructions. As long as the individuals enioy support and care of the society, they submit themselves to the societal control. When the society is unable to provide these services in the event of its being disintegrated, the individuals are thrown on themselves and exposed to sufferings. They have no reason to endure the life's sufferings patiently in their hapless state. They take recourse to suicide to escape from the sufferings.

Altruistic Suicide

When the social integration is to strong, says Durkheim, such condition is more likely to lead to suicide. Such suicide he calls altruistic suicide. This suicide is a kind of sacrifice. In the condition of over-integration into the society and greater attachment with it, the individuals consider their own life as of no worth as compared to the value of the society. So they sacrifice themselves for the sake of the society. For them, worthwhileness of life lies in the sacrifice for the society or for its values. Once such an outlook develops and takes firm hold of men, they easily and willingly sacrifice their life for social causes or purposes. As a matter of fact, such men consider themselves only a reflection of the society and therefore of no worth and value in themselves.

Examples of altruistic suicide are legion: women throwing themselves at the funeral pyres of their husbands (known as *sati*), suicide of followers and servants on the death of their chiefs, Japanese *harakiri*, self-immolation by Buddhist monks, self-homicide by army suicide squads and self-destruction by 'human bombs' of militant groups.

One notorious example of altruistic suicide was the mass suicide of the followers of Reverend Jim Jones in a jungle clearing in Jonestown, Guyana in November 1978. They knowingly took a poisoned drink and in some cases had their children drink it as well. They took recourse to this act of suicide since they were made to believe that it was their duty to give their lives for the sake of the society of Jones' followers upon the call from the chief.

Ritzer considers altruistic suicide as forced suicide. As the individuals are indoctrinated or brainwashed that the personal life is of no worth or value as compared to the value of society, they develop a notion that for the sake of society, one should sacrifice oneself. Such a notion pushes them into giving their lives for the sake of the society.

Anomic Suicide

Durkheim notes that when the regulative powers of society are disrupted, it is more likely to result in suicide. Such suicide, he calls anomic suicide. He says that when a society is exposed to a sudden event or critical phase, there may be a disruption in its functioning. The disruptive event may be a positive one like economic boom or a negative one like economic depression. In either case, the event of disruption renders the collectively temporarily incapable of exercising its authority over individuals and restraining their passions. Such condition of the society's authority and regulative powers weakening unleashes the current of anomie – moods of rootlessness or depression – and these currents lead to suicide.

It is relatively easy to envisage in the case of a depression. While an economic crisis like depression takes place all of a sudden, "something like a declassification occurs which suddenly casts certain individuals into a lower state than their previous one". The employees become jobless. The well-off lose their fortunes and become paupers. In such condition the people must reduce their requirements, restrain their needs and learn greater self-control. But in the wake of a sudden change, they cannot make adjustment and reduce their needs and aspirations. Their needs and

aspirations continue to be the same. Normally it is the responsibility of the society to adjust the individuals to the social conditions. But in the wake of a sudden economic crisis, the society also is not able to adjust its members instantaneously to the new life and teach them to practise the increased self-repression to which they are not accustomed. When the needs and aspirations of the individuals remain unrepressed, the state of deregulation or anomie worsens further. "The state of deregulation or anomie is thus further heightened by passions being less disciplined, precisely when they need more discipline". This intolerable condition leads to suicide.

To a superficial observer, the suicide is because of the loss of status or fortunes. But, though there is loss of status of fortune, it is sudden. If the change is gradual, one adjusts to it with ease. But in the case of sudden change, no such adjustment is possible. Even the society which has an imperative duty to adjust the people to the social conditions is unable to adjust the people to the new condition in the event of a sudden crisis; it is thrown out of gear in such event. In the absence of guiding light and regulation, the individuals are driven to the stage of committing suicide.

Somewhat more difficult to imagine is the effect of an economic boom. In this case, the sudden economic success leads individuals away from the traditional structures in which they are embedded. The easy availability of the sources and opportunities of amassing the economic fortunes drives the individuals to utilize the occasion of boom to the maximum possible extent. They throw to the winds the values and norms they have so far observed in their business and economic pursuits. For them the goal of amassing economic fortunes alone becomes paramount. In the face of their changed attitude and behaviour, religion becomes weak; the government, instead of regulating the economic situation, becomes its tools and servant. In short, the social mechanism of regulation and restraint weakens in such condition and the individuals become free of external restraint and control.

The freedom from external restraint the individuals thus enjoy in the circumstances of social regulation weakening, itself turns out to be an intolerable condition on the other hand. As the moral, regulated life and its pleasures to which the individuals are accustomed previously become things of the past, their life goes meaningless and cheerless in spite of the new economic success. They feel the loss of the soul of life. Thus the condition of deregulation or anomie becomes intoterable for them on the other hand. It creates currents of anomie or moods of rootlessness and these currents lead to suicide.

In Durkheim's view, when a crisis, whether positive (for e.g. economic boom) or negative (for e.g. economic depression) occurs suddenly, it undermines the regulative powers of the society and results in deregulation. Such condition unleashes the currents of anomie which lead to suicide.

Fatalistic Suicide

Durkheim discusses one more form of suicide – fatalistic suicide. But he speaks only a little of it – he discusses it only in a footnote in his *The Suicide* (1897). Whereas anomic suicide is more likely to occur in situations in which regulation is too weak, fatalistic suicide is more likely to occur when regulation is excessive. Durkheim describes those who are more likely to commit fatalistic suicide as "persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently checked by oppressive discipline". The classic example is the slave who takes his own life because of the hopelessness associated with the oppressive regulation of his every action. Too much regulation – oppression – unleashes currents of despair that, in turn, cause the individuals to commit suicide.

CONCLUSION

Durkheim's only concern regarding suicide is to demonstrate it as a social fact. By relating it to the social conditions, he tries to demonstrate that it is a social fact. His classification of suicide is an attempt in this regard.

KEY WORDS

Altruistic suicide: Suicide that occurs in a condition in which the individuals are strongly integrated into the society and give too much importance to serving the society.

Anomic suicide: Suicide that occurs in a condition of breakdown of social regulation or restraint which leaves the individuals in a mood of rootlessness.

Anomie: Durkheim uses this word in two senses: one, in the sense of condition of breakdown of social regulation or restraint; two, in the sense of the mood of rootlessness to which people are driven by the condition of the breakdown of social regulation.

Egoistic suicide: Suicide that occurs in a condition in which the individuals are not adequately integrated into the society and give too much importance to their ego.

Fatalistic suicide: Suicide that occurs in a condition of excessive regulation, that its repression.

Harakiri: Ritual suicide by disembowelment practiced by high-ranking Japanese to avoid disgrace. Japanese calls it *seppuku*. (Jap. *hara*, "belly" + *kiri*, "cutting").

Integration: Refers to the degree to which collective sentiments are shared.

Regulation: Refers to the degree of external constraint on people.

Sati (or *suttee*): A HIndu custom, widely prevalent in the 18th and 19th centuries in India, of widows throwing themselves alive and being cremated on the funeral pyres of their husbands' bodies.

Social current: Mood created in the people by a social condition. E.g. mood of enthusiasm of the people in a crowd situation, mood of altruism the people have in the condition of too much social integration.

Suicide: Refers to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from the positive or negative acts of the victim himself who knows the result they produce.

THEORY OF RELIGION

Durkheim is used to give importance to material social facts or material manifestations of non-material social facts in his sociological work (for example, law in *The Division of Labour in Society* and suicide rates in *The Suicide*). Yet he does not ignore the non-material social facts. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), he addresses non-material facts, in particular, religion more directly. He sheds new light on this ultimate non-material social fact in the said work.

KINDS OF OBJECTS

Durkheim notes that human beings encounter a number of objects, events and experiences in their life. He classifies them into two categories, namely (1) the profane, and (2) the sacred. The ordinary commonplace elements of everyday life are treated as the *profane*. The extraordinary elements that inspire awe, reverence and even fear are regarded as the *sacred*. The sacred objects are set apart and forbidden; no one can touch them, or treat them casually. In the words of Durkheim, "The sacred thing is par excellence which the profane should not touch and cannot touch with impunity".

THE SACRED

Normally, "all sorts of things which surpass the limits of our knowledge" fall in the realm of religion. With them the sacred objects also join and fall in the realm of religion. As the profane objects are ordinary, commonplace elements, they are understandable. But as the sacred objects are extraordinary, they cannot easily be understood; they are beyond the limits of knowledge. Hence they fall in the realm of religion and constitute its nucleus.

The sacredness in an object does not inhere in itself. It is the society that confers sacredness on an object. It defines certain objects as the

sacred. Once defined so, they are "set apart and forbidden". By this it is meant that what is defined as sacred is separated from everyday life and evokes a reverent response (O'dea & Aviad). It is this power the sacred object enjoys that keeps it distinct from the profane object. The circle of sacred objects is not determined once for all. Some of the profane objects may also be transformed into sacred objects in certain circumstances and added to the pantheon of sacred objects.

In Durkheim's view, the differentiation between the sacred and the profane and the elevation of some objects to the sacred level constitute the essence of religion. Religion is built around the sacred objects. Durkheim rejects the notion of the God or the supernatural as the essence of religion. He asserts that religion cannot be reduced to belief in God, because there are religions without an apparent God. For example, Buddhism and Confucianism are without God. Buddhism even denies the existence of God.

Aspects Relative to the Sacred

Relative to the sacred things, two aspects are formed. One is the beliefs and the other is rituals. *Beliefs* are "the representations which express the nature of sacred things and the relations which they sustain, either with each other or with the profane things". *Rituals* are "the rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should comport himself in the presence of these sacred objects". While the beliefs express the ideas of the people about the nature of the sacred things, the rituals express their comportment in the presence of the sacred things. These two aspects are interrelated. The interrelationship between them leads Durkheim to 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. . .".

Thus the beliefs and rituals relative to sacred things constitute religion. Further they unite those who adhere to them into a single moral community called a church.

SOURCE OF RELIGION

The ultimate question for Durkheim is the source of religion. He begins the search of the origin of religion by refuting the prevalent theories of the origin of religion. Edward Tylor (1832–1917), the distinguished English ethnologist, in his theory of 'animism' traces the origin of religion from the spirit worship. He contends that by seeing spirits in dreams and hallucinations, man developed the notion of a separate force dwelling in him and animating his body and built a system of worship around such force. Max Muller (1823–1900), the noted German linguist in his theory of 'naturism' relates religion to the worship of nature's forces. He maintains that religion originated from man's fear and worship of the nature's force. Durkheim rejects these theories because they fail to explain the universal key distinction between the sacred and the profane, and because they tend to explain religion away by interpreting it as an illusion. Moreover, to adore spirits transfigured merely by hallucination or to adore natural forces transfigured merely by fear would make religious experience a kind of collective hallucination.

Durkheim asserts that religion is not a matter of illusion. It is a reality – a social fact that is experienced empirically. Its source lies in the society. Operating from his basic methodological position that a social fact is caused only by another social fact, Durkheim concludes that society is the source of religion. Society (through individuals) creates religion by defining certain phenomena as the sacred and others as the profane.

Selection of Primitive Religion

For the study of the origin of religion, Durkheim turns to the published data on the religion of a primitive Australian tribe, the Arunta. Durkheim regards religion in primitive society as the most suitable unit for the study of religion. He feels it important to study religion within a primitive setting for several reasons. *First*, he believes that it is much easier to gain insight into the essential nature of religion of a primitive setting than in more modern society. Religion in primitive society remains in the original form without being contaminated by the external intrusions. It can be "shown

in all its nudity". *Secondly*, primitive religion's ideological systems are less developed than those of modern religion, with the result that there is less obfuscation. As Durkheim puts it, "That which is accessory or secondary . . . has not yet come to hide the principal elements". *Third*, whereas religion in modern society takes diverse forms, in primitive society religion remains homogeneous and uniform. As a result, religion can be studied in its pristine form with reference to the primitive religion. *Finally*, although Durkheim studies primitive religion, it is not because of his interest in that form per se. Rather, he studies it in order to understand the religious nature of man. He believes that the study of modern religion does not help in this respect, but only the study of primitive religion does so.

Totemism

Durkheim's selection of primitive religion narrows down to the religion of the Aruntas, because he believes that the Aruntas are the most primitive community available on the surface of the earth. The religion of the Aruntas is totemism. Totemism is a religious system in which certain things, particularly animals, birds and plants, come to be regarded as sacred and held as emblems of the clan. Totemism is the most primitive form of religion. It is paralleled by a similar primitive form of social organisation, the *clan*. By relating clan system to totemism, Durkheim tries to demonstrate that clan is the source of totemism.

In a primitive tribe, the community is divided into number of clans. Each clan is identified by a common symbol like an animal, a bird or a plant. One clan is called 'Wolf', yet another 'Eagle' or 'Tamarind' and so on and so forth. The totem symbol is the source of unification of the members of a clan. The members feel that they are somehow related with one another through their common symbol. Further, the totem symbol acts as a source of identity of the clan like the flag of a nation. A clan is distinguished from other clans by its totem symbol. A clan's identity is understood only from its totem symbol. It symbolizes the clan. In other words, the clan gets personified and represented to the imagination under

the visible form of the totem symbol. In short, the totem symbol is the clan personified.

The attitude of the members of a clan towards their totem symbol is one of reverence. They will not harm that animal, bird or plant. Should any circumstance arise to kill or destroy it, they offer collective excuse before killing or destroying it. If it happens to die or perish, the clansmen mourn it ceremonially. If there is a grave emergency, they first worship it. They have a system of rituals for preserving and perpetuating the species of their totem. In this way, the totem of a clan appears to be a divine thing.

Clan

Thus the totem which represents a determined society, that is, clan, comes to represent the 'god' of the clan. In other words, the determined society is divinized by means of its symbol, that is, the collective representation being adored as a sacred thing - 'god'. By worshipping the totem as a divine thing -- 'god', the people worship the determined society the totem symbolizes.

Thus by showing that the clan is the source of totemism, Durkheim demonstrates his argument that society is at the root of religion. Here is the way Durkheim makes his argument: 'If we succeed in discovering the origins of the beliefs . . ., we shall very probably discover at the same time the cause leading to the rise of the religious sentiment in humanity'.

CONCLUSION

Durkheim claims that just as societies in the past have created gods and religion, societies of the future are inclined to create new gods and new religions when they are in a state of exaltation. When societies are seized by the sacred frenzy, men participating in ritualistic ceremonies, religious services, feasts and festivals go into a trance and experience a sensation of something that has no relation to everyday experience. During such moments of sacred frenzy and collective trance, new gods and new religions will be born.

KEY WORDS

Animism: System of worship of spirits.

Belief (religious): Feeling that something is sacred.

Clan: A group of people who claim descent from a common mythical ancestor or have a common symbol as a source of their identity.

Collective representation: An object that symbolizes a collectivity and stands for its collective conscience.

Naturism: System of worship of natural forces, prompted mostly out of fear.

The profane: Ordinary, commonplace things of everyday life. They can be handled casually.

The sacred: The things that are set apart and forbidden. They cannot be handled casually. They are adored and worshipped.

Totemism: A religious system in which certain things like animals, birds or plants are regarded as sacred things and held as emblems of clans.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. According to Durkheim, social facts are to be treated as
   (A) Ideal Types
   (B) Psychological phenomena
   (C) Natural forces
   (D) Things
2. Mechanical solidarity arises in a situation of
   (A) Similarities
   (B) Dissimilarities
   (C) Mechanical life processes
   (D) Natural disaster
3. The religious system which Durkheim analysed in connection with his causal explanation of religion was

(A) Naturism

(B) Animism

(C) Totemism

(D) Fetishism

4. Describe the characteristics of social facts.
5. Discuss how society superimposes itself on the individuals.
6. Explain how mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity differ from one another.
7. Explain the situation in which division of labour arises.
8. Summarize Durkheim's views on the cause of suicide.
9. Describe the different types of suicide.
10. Describe the origin of religion in the light of the causal explanation furnished by Durkheim about the same.

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UNIT - VI

TALCOTT PARSONS

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) was born in 1902 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, U.S. He came from a religious and intellectual background. His father, Rev. Edward Parsons was a congregational minister, a college teacher of English and ultimately the president of a small college in Ohio.

After the completion of his early school training, he joined Amherst College in Massachusetts in 1920 for under-graduate training. There was no sociology taught in this college. Parsons received training only in biology. During the studies, he came into association with an economics professor, Walter Hamilton and a philosopher Clarence Ayers at Amherst College and this association created in him interest in economics and philosophy.

Parsons completed his graduate studies at Amherst in 1924. With the financial help provided by an indulgent uncle, he set out to England for further studies at London School of Economics. It had a reputation for academic excellence. It was at the London School of Economics that Parsons received his basic grounding in sociology and absorbed a wide range of influences from other disciplines like economics, philosophy, anthropology, political science and so on. He also met his future wife Helen Walker at the London School.

In 1925 Parsons went to Heidelberg on an exchange fellowship. Here he came into contact with German Sociology. The main influence and the one which had a great impact on his own sociology came not from the living sociologists, but from the published works of such eminent sociologists of the previous generation as Marx, Weber and Sombart. Their writings on capitalism affected Parsons very much and influenced his doctoral thesis. His thesis was concerned with the conceptions of capitalism

in the German social science literature with special reference to the works of Marx, Weber and Sombart.

After his Heidelberg stay of a year, Parsons returned to take up a teaching post in economics at Amherst. In 1927, when his doctoral thesis at Heidelberg was completed, the head of the Department of Economics of Amherst college arranged for him a job at Harvard University as an instructor in the Economics Department. His spell of service as an instructor in Economics Department at Harvard was brief. He very soon switched to the newly started Department of Sociology. In the beginning he joined there as an instructor and ultimately he became a full professor and chairman of the department. In 1946, he founded an innovative department called Department of Social Relations and became its chairman. The department included not only sociologists, but a variety of other social scientists. He remained and taught there till his retirement as Emeritus Professor in 1973.

By 1949, he was elected the President of the American Sociological Association. In the 1950s and 1960s with the publication of such books as *The Social System* (1951), Parsons became the dominant figure in American Sociology.

After his retirement from Harvard in 1973, he took up teaching assignments in other universities. He taught at Retgurs and California. He also continued to publish, to present papers at professional meetings and to give guest lectures. He earned a big circle of students and colleagues that included Robert K. Merton, Wilbert Moore, Kingsley Davis, Robert Williams, Marian J. Levy, R.F. Bales, Edward Shils and Neil J. Smelser. Many of them collaborated with Parsons to produce critical sociological treatises.

On 8th May 1979, Parsons died of heart attack in Heidelberg in the same place as his intellectual mentor, Max Weber in 1920. Till his death he dominated American sociology for several decades. In the 1950s and 1960s his flag of dominance flew at high mast. However by the late 1960s,

when a radical wing emerged in American sociology, he was subjected to a bitter attack by it. He was portrayed as a political conservative and his theory as highly conservative. But in the 1980s, a favourable atmosphere arose and there was a resurgence in interest in his theory in the U.S. and around the world. Furthermore, his ideas are influencing not only conservative thinkers, but neo-Marxist theorists as well.

THEORY OF ACTION

Parsons' significant contribution to sociology is his theory of action. Instead of using the word, *behaviour* which the psychologists tend to use, he chooses the term *action* because it has a different connotation from that of behaviour. Behaviour implies mechanical response to stimulus. As Watson, the proponent of the theory of behaviourism says, all behaviour, whether animal or human, is fundamentally of stimulus-response pattern. But action implies an active, creative, 'mental' process. It arises from the consciousness of the actors.

However, Parsons agrees that the concept of action is derived from behaviour of human beings. Behaviour becomes action when the following conditions are present:

1. It is oriented to a future state of affairs, that is, an end or goal.
2. It occurs in a situation in which the actor is confronted with a number of alternative means.
3. It involves the choice of a means by the actor on the basis of a subjective decision, guided by some orientation.

COMPONENTS

Thus an action, according to Parsons, comprises four elements, namely, (1) actor, (2) end, (3) situation and (4) orientation. As these elements are interrelated and interconnected, Parsons describes action as a system.

The very action implies the existence of *actor* who could be either a single person or a collectivity. But for him, there is no action at all. It is he who decides about the action and animates it. He is the point of reference in the system.

The action involves an *end*, that is, it is oriented to an end. While seeking to realize the end, the actor is confronted with a *situation* which

comprises two elements. One element is the 'conditions' over which he has no control, such as his own biological make-up and heredity as well as various ecological constraints. Another element is the means over which the actor has control. In such a situation, within the situational constraints, he chooses a means and seeks to realize the end.

To choose a means for realizing the end, he needs an *orientation*, that is, a condition that prompts him to act in a given situation. According to Parsons, in two ways, an actor is 'oriented' to a situation. One is in terms of *motives* (needs and readiness to mobilize energy) and the other is in terms of *values* (conceptions about what is appropriate).

In the case of orientation based on motives, called *motivational orientation*, there are three types of motive involved. They are: (1) the cognitive (involving information), (2) the cathectic (involving emotional attachment), and (3) the evaluative (involving assessment). In the case of *cognitive orientation*, the actor gets the motivation to act on the basis of the rational consideration. Having adequate information about the means whether it is suitable, he makes his decision. In the case of *cathectic orientation*, the actor gets the motivation to act, driven by the emotional consideration or sentiment. He invests the object (means) with affective significance and chooses it. Only his like for it acts as the factor in his action. In the case of *evaluative orientation*, he takes into consideration the optimum efficiency. He considers whether the object will give him maximum satisfaction. In short, the cognitive orientation enables an actor to judge the quality of the means in relation to his needs; the cathectic orientation determines as to which means he likes more than others; and the evaluative orientation makes it possible for him to make a choice which gives him maximum satisfaction.

The orientation based on values, *value orientation* also comprises three parts. They are: (1) the cognitive, (2) the appreciative and (3) the moral. The *cognitive orientation* is one which relates to the issue of validity of judgement. The *appreciative orientation* is that which makes it possible for

actors to judge their emotional response to object. The *moral orientation* is one which refers to value commitment towards his object.

While the motivational orientation involves only the motives or psychological aspects of the actor, the value orientation involves values or cultural aspects. Both these psychological and cultural aspects of the individual 'behaviour' are interlinked and interdependent.

EARLIER APPROACHES TO ACTION

Thus, according to Parsons, in a situation an individual chooses an object (means) by acting with a motivational orientation and a value orientation. Earlier, there were three different approaches to action. They were: (1) the utilitarian, (2) the positivist, and (3) the idealist.

The utilitarians see action in a highly individualist fashion. They explain that the individuals are goal-seekers and in their goal-seeking, they are solely guided by the utilitarian considerations. They act rationally by attempting to choose those behaviours that will maximize their gains in the transactions with others. The positivists, on the other hand, believe that individuals act in a situation on the basis of full information about the situation. As it is the correct way to act, there is no room for error or variation in the action. The idealists posit that the individuals act in a commitment to ultimate values and ideas.

Parsons agrees upon the essence of thought of each school, the utilitarian, the idealist and the positivist. But he objects to their excluvism. The utilitarians emphasize only the individual's consideration of utilitarian aspects and ignore the influence of the collective on the action. The positivists emphasize complete knowledge of the situation and overlook the role of values, or possible errors or variations. The idealists talk of values and miss out the utilitarian considerations.

Parsons combines the essences of these schools of thought in his approach to action. He brings out the significance of motivational factors

such as those present in the utilitarian perspective in the formation of the action system as well as that of values.

TYPES OF ACTION

In Parsons's view, it is the motives and values that act as the driving forces of action. The relative salience of these motives and values create a composite type of action, which can be one of three types:

(1) Instrumental action (action oriented to realize explicit goals efficiently).

(2) Expressive action (action directed at realizing emotional satisfaction).

(3) Moral action (action concerned with realizing standards of right and wrong).

An actor acts in one of these basic ways depending upon which modes of motivational and value orientation are strongest. For example, if cognitive motives are strong, and cognitive values most salient, their action will be primarily instrumental, although it will have expressive and moral content. Thus the various combinations and permutations of the modes of orientation – that is, motives and values – produce action geared in one of these general directions.

VOLUNTARISM

Parsons says that human action is voluntary. The individuals make choices in situations out of their will. This is not to say that actors are totally free in their choices; voluntarism is not equivalent to free will. Though the individual makes decision himself regarding the choice of means by taking into account his needs and plans as well as situational constraints; such subjective decision-making is guided by the determinate selective factors of norms and values. The norms and values govern his choice of means. Parsons says that there is 'no such thing as action except as effort to conform to norms'. As Wallace and Wolf point out, 'Actors cannot ignore the rules of the game; the rules define their ends and how they behave, and normative expectations must be fulfilled by any actor who is motivated to pursue a goal.'

ASPECTS

The *needs* and *motives* of course, play a role in deciding the end. The actors also are capable of understanding the situational constraints and identifying the suitable means for realizing the end. Yet the choice of the end and of the means to realize it are governed by the values and norms. The values define the ends and norms govern how to achieve them.

Apart from being governed by values and norms, the human action involves another aspect. It does not occur in isolation. It occurs in *interactional setting*. As an actor has necessarily to interact with others to seek his goal, such aspect also finds a place in action.

Thus action involves three aspects and Parsons designates them as personality system, cultural system and social system. The *personality system* refers to those aspects of the human personality which affect the functioning of the actor such as needs and motives. The *cultural system* encompasses the concrete value systems which define the ends and the norms governing how to achieve them. The *social system*, in this context, refers to the modes of interaction between the actor and other individuals that occur in the context of the pursuit of the goal.

Parsons adds one more aspect in his action schema. It is *organic system* (subsequently called behavioural organic system). It refers to the biological equipment of the individuals, that is the biological 'facilities' that serve as inputs to the personality system. They include motivational energy, cognitive capacity, performance capacity and the mechanisms that integrate these capacities with one another. Parsons links this system with personality system.

Thus in Parsons's view, action is organized and structured into a system with behavioural organic system, personality system, cultural system and social system as its aspects or to put it formally, subsystems.

Behavioural Organic System	Personality System
Cultural System	Social System

Figure - 7.1.1: Structure of Action System

All these four aspects of the action system are independent; one cannot be reduced to the other. However they are interrelated. Each one is indispensable to and at the same time dependent upon others. For example, personality system is dependent upon the behavioural organic system. Personalities and social system are shaped by culture. Culture is rooted in individuals (personalities) and social relationships (social system). Parsonian analysis is concerned with how these four elements interrelate, or to put it more formally, how they integrate into action.

KEY WORDS

Action: Refers to behaviour when according to Parsons,

(1) it is oriented to an end or goal;

(2) it occurs in a situation in which the individual is confronted with a number of alternative means;

(3) it involves the choice of a means on the basis of subjective decision, guided by some orientation.

Appreciative (value) orientation: A person directing interest to an object by judging his/her emotional response to it.

Behavioural organic system: Refers to the totality of biological 'facilities' or capacities that serve as inputs for the development of motives and needs.

Cathectic (motivational) orientation: Getting motivation to act, driven by emotional considerations.

Cognitive (motivational) orientation: Getting motivation to act by having full information.

Cognitive (value) orientation: A person directing interest to an object by analysing the validity of his judgement about it.

Cultural system: Refers to the totality of the value systems and norms.

Evaluative (motivational) orientation: Getting motivation to act by assessing whether the action will give maximum satisfaction.

Expressive action: Action directed at realizing emotional satisfaction.

Instrumental action: Action oriented to realize explicit goals efficiently.

Moral action: Action concerned with realizing standards of right and wrong.

Moral (value) orientation: A person directing interest to an object out of value commitment.

Motivational orientation: Making a decision to act in a situation or directing interest to an object.

Orientation: Making a decision to act in a situation or directing interest to an object.

Personality system: Refers to the totality of those aspects of human personality which affect the functioning of the individual such as needs and motives.

Situation: The condition with which an individual is confronted while acting, say available means and constraints in choosing them.

Social system: Refers to the totality of the modes of interaction occurring between the individuals while pursuing goals.

Value orientation: Making a decision to act in a situation out of a sense of value commitment.

PATTERN VARIABLES

According to Parsons, an actor in his role-performance has necessarily to interact with others. In such a situation, he faces dilemmas as to how to act in relation to others. Here Parsons says that the choices an actor has to make are determined by the type of the social organization.

Ferdinand Tonnies (1855-1936) classifies social organization into two types, namely, *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft* is characterized by predominance of close personal bonds while *geselleschaft* is characterized by predominance of more impersonal or business-like relationships. The former is represented by traditional society and the latter, by modern society. Parsons considers the difference pointed out by Tonnies between the two to be fundamental. He labels the relationships in the *gemeinschaft*-type organization, which are predominantly personal and stable, 'expressive' and relationships in modern society which are predominantly impersonal or business-like, 'instrumental'.

According to Parsons, in each type of organization, there are specific ways for the actors to act in relation to social objects (others). As there are broadly two types of social organizations in which actors participate, there are only two sets of ways to act, before the actors and they have to choose one of the sets according to the type of their social organization. Parsons calls these two sets of ways present before the actors to act as 'pattern variables'.

PAIRS OF PATTERN VARIABLES

The pattern variables constitute 'a dichotom one side of which must be chosen by an actor before the meaning of a situation is determinate for him, and thus before he can act with respect to that situation'. The dichotom with its two sides is presented in the following table.

Table 7.2.1: Pairs of Pattern Variables

Actor	MODALITIES of Objects		Actor's EVALUATION of Objects
Person	Social	Quality: Classificatory / Relational	Affectivity–Neurality Particularism–Universalism Quality–Performance Specificity–Diffuseness Self Orientation–Collectivity Orientation
		Performance: Classificatory / Relational	
	Non-Social	Quality: Classificatory / Relational	
		Performance: Classificatory / Relational	
Collectivity	?		?

Actor's ORIENTATION towards Objects			Objects
Motivational Orientation	Value Orientation	Action Orientation	Self Alter
Cognitive	+ Cognitive	= Intellectual	Collectivity
Cathectic	+ Appreciative	= Expressive	Organism
Evaluative	+ Moral	= Responsible	Physical
Cathectic / Evaluative	+ Appreciative / Cognitive	= Instrumental	Cultural
?			?

(Note: The variable of self-orientation vs collectivit y-orientation does not find a place in Parsons's scheme of pattern variables after 1953).

The Table 7.2.1 summarizes the pattern variable scheme. The choices that the actors make with respect to the ways they have to act differ according to the type of social organization. The appropriate choices for the social organizations characterized by expressive relationship are on the left-hand side and the appropriate choices for the social organizations characterized by predominance of instrumental relationship are on the right-hand side.

Affectivity versus Affective Neutrality

The first choice the actors must make is between affectivity and affective neutrality. Here the issue is whether or not the actor can show affect towards the alter in the role relationship. Relationship in which people usually act expressively or emotionally are characterized by a high degree of affectivity. Relationships in which people would, for the most part, act instrumentally are characterized by a high degree of affective neutrality. The doctor is not supposed to show affect, positive or negative, towards the patient. Functionally there are good reasons for these norms. Deviation from this norm would make it difficult for the doctor to treat patients. If the doctor is emotionally involved with a patient, he may find it hard to make an objective diagnosis. It is for this reason that doctors normally do not treat close relatives and friends. In the relationship between a husband and wife, on the other hand, a great deal of affect is permitted; in fact, in this relationship, failure to express affect is a form of deviance.

Self-orientation versus Collectivity-orientation

The second pattern variable is self-orientation or collectivity-orientation. Here the dilemma is whether private interests can be gratified or some collective obligation or duty must be fulfilled. If a society is more highly complex and developed, there is a greater likelihood that individuals will be primarily concerned with pursuing their own interests. However, even in a complex society, individuals are generally committed to some collectivity, but the extent of their commitment varies greatly. Thus family members are expected to be committed to the family; doctors are expected to consider the welfare of their patients; civil servants are expected to carry

out their duties in the best interests of the public; On the other hand, we expect the business to be primarily concerned with maximizing their own self-interest. Self-interest is highly institutionalized in the business world and the pursuit of profit motive carries legitimacy.

Particularism versus Universalism

The third pattern variable is particularism versus universalism. Here the dilemma is whether to treat all people equally or give special consideration to some people. To the extent that universalism prevails, the actor treats all people equally and apply the same set of criteria in evaluating every one with whom he comes into contact. Particularism occurs when the actor applies select standards in his relationship with others and treats one individual differently from others. The relationship between teacher and student, doctor and patient, employer and employee would be characterized by universalism. Thus, for example, a teacher is supposed to use the same criteria in evaluating all job applicants. On the other hand, the relationship between friends, husband and wife, mother and children would be characterized by particularism. It is permissible, for example, for a person to treat his friends differently from others. So also it is permissible for a person to treat his wife differently from other women and for a mother to treat her own child differently from other children.

Here it must be noted that while failure to act particularistically as expected is not viewed seriously, failure to act universalistically in the concerned cases is viewed as a form of deviance. When an employer practices particularism by ignoring the qualifications of applicants and by hiring his own kin or friends, the act is viewed as a form of deviance, since he is expected to treat all applicants according to universalistic criteria. His act is considered to amount to 'favouritism' which is opposed to 'universalism'.

Ascription versus Achievement

The fourth pattern variable ascription versus achievement or as it is sometimes labelled, 'quality' versus 'performance' involves the dilemma of

whether to orient oneself towards others on the basis of what they are (that is, on the basis of asserted qualities, such as sex, age, race, ethnicity) or on the basis of what they can do or have done (that is, on the basis of performance). This dilemma is one or similar to that encountered in the case of particularism versus universalism. This dilemma arises in the context of the people having two sets of characteristics. One set comprises the characteristics that a person is born with or has no control over. Sex, age, race and social background are such characteristics that people are born with or can do nothing with. These are called ascribed characteristics. The other set comprises the characteristics which people achieve through their efforts. Education, occupational achievement and skills are such characteristics. These are called achieved characteristics.

Here the dilemma is how an actor is to judge the people whether by their ascribed characteristics or by their achieved characteristics. In modern societies, achieved qualities are supposed to be more important in evaluating others than ascribed qualities. For example, employers are expected to judge the potential employees on the basis of the work that they have done in the past and that they can be expected to do in the future, not according to their colour, sex, family connections. Thus, employers should choose the performance, or achievement side of the pattern variable dichotomy, rather than the ascriptive, or quality side. When, for instance, a young member of a famous family is hired for a job over others with better performance qualifications, an outcry from the public is expected. But, on the other hand, in most primitive societies, the norms prescribe that people can be judged on the basis of ascribed characteristics.

Specificity versus Diffuseness

The fifth pattern variable is specificity versus diffuseness. Here the issue is the scope of social relationship. In some relationships, the interactions are limited to a specific purpose or task. In other relationships, one interacts with the same people in many different situations and for many different purposes. Generally the social relationships that would be

universalistic are also specific. Thus the interaction between doctor and patient is most often specific. There is a limit to the interaction between them. The interaction is confirmed only to some aspects of the patient's health. If either doctor or patient oversteps the limit of their interaction by making demands that are not connected with the patient's health, such as asking personal questions about family, business or income, or seeking a personal favour, a negative sanction can be expected from the other party. Particularistic relationships, on the other hand, are usually diffuse. For example, the interaction between husband and wife or friends is wide-ranging. One can expect a lot from the other. There is no limit to the number and types of demands being made on the other.

Conclusion

Parsons thinks that in the modern industrial societies, the instrumental variables predominate. Yet, he suggests, there will be some grey areas which are not covered by instrumental variables. Family is one such area. It is largely characterized by expressive variables. On the other hand, in the economic and political subsystems variables, as there is an interchange of personnel, are broadly characterized by instrumental variables between these system parts, a potential conflict arises. In the family system which is based upon sentiments and solidarity, people experience only expressive or *gemeinschaft* atmosphere. But when they come to participate in the economic or political system where there is no room for sentiment, they experience a different atmosphere. Thus they are exposed to a tension in such a situation. This situation has to be coped with by society through some integrating mechanisms for managing such tensions, in order to ensure the required degree of equilibrium for the maintenance of order.

Parsons suggests that the school system acts as a means in providing a mechanism which can minimize the potential conflict between the system parts. As a "focal socializing agency", it socializes the child (who in his family situation has been experiencing the values and norms classified under "expressive" pattern variables) into roles and thereby values and

norms which can be classified under "instrumental" pattern variables. In other words, the children who receive expressive orientation at home receive instrumental orientation though the school and tread the instrumental path in the society.

KEY WORDS

Expressive relationship: Relationship that is characterized by personal involvement. It is an end in itself.

Gemeinschaft: A type of social organization characterized by personal, close and stable relationships.

Gesellschaft: A type of social organization characterized by impersonal, business-like and unstable relationships.

Instrumental relationship: Relationship that serves as an instrument for realizing an end.

Pattern variables: Refer to the ways the actors have to choose while playing their roles in relation to others. In Parson's view, every society patterns the ways of behaviour and they all fall in two sets. An actor has to choose one of the sets to act in relation to others.

THEORY OF SOCIAL SYSTEM

The predominant theme of Parson's theoretical scheme is system. As he himself admits, "The concept of system has been central to my thinking from a very early stage". The action is the first level in his theme. The social system is the next level and it is the one on which he elaborates the most. He devotes an entire book (The Social System, 1951) to this topic.

Parsons's conception of social system begins at the miers level with interaction between a person and another person, defined it as the most elementary form of the social system. He spends little time analysing this level, although he argues that features of this interaction system are present in two more combined forms of interaction. Parsons defines a social system thus:

A social system consists in a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in intuition which has at least a physical or environmental aspect, actors who are metirated in terms of a tendency to the "optimisation of gratification": and whose relations to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols.

This definition seeks to define social system in terms of the elements, namely, actors, interaction, environment, optimization of gratification and culture.

INTERACTION

In Parsons's definition, social system is basically a plurality and the plurality may range from a small group, say, a family of a husband and wife, to an entire society.

But mere plurality does not constitute a social system. It is only when the members interact with one another that a plurality can constitute a social system and the interaction is occasioned by action.

Parsons says that because of the nature of personality system, every individual is motivationally oriented to an object. He seeks to realize an end or fulfill a need. The need-dispositions, that is, the tendencies in his personality system drive him to act in a way that involves two aspects, regarding his end. One is gratificational aspect and the other is orientational aspect. The gratificational aspect concerns what of action and orientational aspect, how of action. The individual tends to achieve gratification of his need or desire. This tendency of "motivation towards gratification" corresponds to the exchange theorists' and conflict theorists' assumptions that people are "self-oriented" or "profit maximizers". The individual also has a tendency to interact with others. Such tendency drives him to orient himself with others and makes him pursue his end by interacting with others. So, an individual comes into relationships with others in the pursuit of his goal and in such condition, the interaction contributes the social system.

STATUS AND ROLE

In the interactional setting, that is, in the social system, the participation of the individual involves two aspects. One is the positional aspect and the other, processual aspect. The positional aspect is what place the individual occupies in the social system and the processual aspect is what the individual does while occupying a place in the social system. The former is referred to as *status* and the latter *role*. Both of them are related and connected with one another. Status refers to the position held by the individual in the social system and role refers to the expected behaviour attached to the status. The individual participates in the social system by occupying both status and role.

Both status and role are oriented to the other actors. In status the actor is the object of orientation of others. In role he is oriented to the

other actor(s). For example, if a person occupies a status of husband in a social system (family), he is the object of orientation for another actor in the system, that is wife. He acts out his status (role) by being a good provider for the wife.

ROLE RELATIONSHIPS

Thus status and role occupied by an actor in a social system have relevance only in relation to another actor(s). In turn, the status and role of the related sector are oriented to the actor. It is this complementarity that binds the two actors together in a patterned relationship. In such relational context, an actor plays a dual role. One is *orientation role* where actor as ego (self) plays a role oriented to alter (Other person). The other is *object role* where actor is the object of actor's orientation. For example, in a family, in one capacity, husband acts as ego for the wife when she is alter and in another capacity, serves as alter for the wife when she is ego.

Thus social system is formed in the context of role relationships between the actors. The individuals get together and form a system by virtue of their role relationships. It is because of status and role they occupy and the relationships they enter into with one another in such context that they become actors - members in a system. Here Parsons considers not the individuals as the components of a system, but the status-role complex–that is, bundle of status and role – the individuals occupy. He views the social system mainly in terms of status-roles.

Individuals become members, participants in a social system not in their individual capacity, but only in the capacity of status-role occupants. They are there in the system only by virtue of status-roles they occupy therein. Should they not occupy any status-role, they can no longer be participants in a system. Thus Parsons regards status-role not as an aspect or attribute of the actors, but rather as a structural component of the system. The individuals just come and occupy the status roles and by virtue of it, participate in the system. They find a place in a system only

by occupying the status-roles, they interact with one another. In such context, social system is formed.

NORMS AND VALUES

While an individual occupies a status in the social system such as husband, teacher or citizen, he has to act out his status by performing the role associated with it. Again he has to play his status-role in accord with the role expectations, that is, what is expected of a person in his status-role. The role expectations are embodied in the norms and values set down by the system. They define the rights and obligations of roles. So the occupants of a status in a system, while acting out their status, that is, while playing the role associated with their status, go by the normative rules of conduct in their role performance. For example, while a person occupies the status of husband, he has to act it out by being a good provider and in such role, he is guided by the normative rules of conduct.

MECHANISMS OF INTEGRATION

Here Parsons says that mere existence of norms and values does not guarantee that the individuals will observe them while playing their roles in relation to others. The individuals can observe the norms and values only when there is an "integration of value patterns and need-dispositions", to put it in other words, integration of the personality into the social system. For such integration, according to Parsons, in a social system there are certain mechanisms by which the norms and values of a system are transferred to the actors and thereby the personality system of the individuals is integrated into the social system. In this connection, he refers to the mechanism of socialization and mechanism of social control. It is through the operation of these mechanisms that personality system becomes structured such that it is compatible with the structure of social system.

Socialization

In abstract terms, mechanism of *socialization* is seen by Parsons as the means through which cultural patterns – values, beliefs, norms and other symbols – are internalized into the personality system of the individuals. It is through this process that the individuals are taught the norms and values. Further, they are prepared for the roles they are expected to play in different situations. They are made willing to deposit motivational energy in roles and are equipped with interpersonal and other skills necessary for playing roles.

Parsons sees socialization as a life-long experience. Because the norms and values inculcated in childhood tend to be very general, they do not prepare children for the various situations that they encounter in adulthood. So socialization is supplemented through the life cycle with a service of more specialized agencies. Despite this need later in life, the norms and values learned in childhood get internalized; that is, they become part of the individual's conscience and remain in force almost throughout his life.

Social control

Despite the conformity induced by lifelong socialization, there will occur deviation in the system. There will be some people who are 'inadequately socialized', who, for some reason, do not learn or do not become attached to the main norms and values. Further there will be gaps and discrepancies between different parts of the society, resulting in people facing conflicting expectation. Hence deviants are produced, that is, people who in one way or another depart from shared expectations. Departure from shared expectations (that is, deviance) is disruptive of the role relationships. If it is tolerated beyond certain limits, it would tend to disintegrate the system. Therefore the mechanism of social control is needed to discourage non-conformity and to encourage conformity in order to maintain the established patterns of interaction.

Here Parsons makes a note that a system runs best when social control is used only sparingly. So, it must be able to tolerate some variation, some deviance and apply social control when it exceeds the tolerable limits. So, Parsons wants that a system be flexible and accommodate modest amounts of variation and deviance. He observes that a flexible system is stronger than a brittle one that accepts no deviation.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT

Parsons views a social system as a setting in which a plurality of actors interact with one another by playing certain status roles towards one another in accord with the culturally structured and shared symbols, namely norms and values. In his view, any organized form of interaction can fit in the concept of social system. Whether it may be a tiny group, say two friends, or a large organization like the society, it can fit in Parsons's concept of social system. However each system has its identity derived from the status-roles existing therein. For example, we could conceptualize a family system in terms of the component status-roles of husband, wife and children. These status-roles demarcate the boundary of the family system. Parsons adds this aspect as a feature of social system and says that, like any system, whether mechanical or biological, a social system has boundary.

What exists beyond the boundary forms *environment* for any system. A social system also has an environment beyond its boundary and such environment, in Parson's view, comprises the cultural system, the personality system and the behavioural organic system. As Parsons views a social system as a constellation of action, he puts in its environment these three systems which constitute the other constellations of action.

Economy	Polity
Kinship	Societal Community

Figure - 7.3.1

The social system is an "open" system, open to the influence of the other systems lying contiguous to it. Its borders are permeable and allow the things of other systems to pass into it. From the cultural system come the values and norms that serve to legitimize and regulate the interaction among the people in roles in social system. From the personality system, the social system receives the persons who have motivational orientation to occupy the status-roles that make up the setting of social interaction of social system. From the behavioural organic system, the social system receives the motivational energy, cognitive capacity and performance capacity required for acting out the roles. By maintaining these exchange relationships with other systems, into four "functional imperatives". They are given below.

1. Adaptation: This involves the problem of mobilizing resources to keep itself functioning. Any society (or other smaller unit) must mobilize resources to keep itself functioning, for which it has to depend upon the environment. It must adapt itself to the environment or adapt the environment to its needs and extract necessary facilities from it. At the level of society, for example, there is a need to extract resources such as food, clothing, shelter, etc. from the physical environment.

2. Goal Attainment: This refers to the problem of defining and achieving the primary goal of the system. Every social unit sets a primary goal for it and mobilizes resources to achieve it. For example, a school needs to produce educated and trained people and must organize itself to get this done by mobilizing resources (inputs) from its environment.

Adaptation and goal attainment refer to the first condition for survival–the need for the social units to relate to the environment from which they draw facilities and into which they inject 'outputs' of their achievements. For example, the schools produce the educated and trained people required by the rest of the society–here society is the 'environment' of schools.

The next two imperatives have to do with the second condition, namely, the system's internal regulation.

3. Integration: This denotes the problem of regulating and coordinating the interrelationships among the units within the system. Social units involve relations among actors (individuals) and among subunits (for example, departments in an organization). In relations, there are possibilities of strain and conflict, so there must be ways of regulating relations amongst parts.

4. Latency: Latency embraces two related problems: pattern maintenance and tension management. 'Pattern maintenance' pertains to the problem of how to maintain and renew the motivation of the actors in the system in their roles and thereby the patterns of social organization and interaction are sustained over time. 'Tension management' concerns the problem of dealing with the internal tensions and strains that arise in the course of the continuity of action of the actors. Any social unit will get things done, fulfil its goals, only if members are loyal to its purposes and motivated enough to continue to play their parts, thereby providing sustenance of the patterns of organization and interaction. Even if the members are loyal and motivated, they will become stressed and unable to cope if they are kept unrelentingly at full stretch. There must therefore be ways (rest and recuperation) of preventing the build-up of tension or of releasing it when it does build up.

Parsons discusses these four functional imperatives by placing them in a four-box square known as "four-function paradigm" or "AGIL model" (based on the first four letters of the four functions he devised). As these processes fall into two sets of dichotomous categories, the paradigm is placed on two axes. First, some of these processes deal with the need of the system in dealing with its outside (environment). On this count, an axis, namely, internal-external axis, is formed. Secondly, some of these processes deal with the achievement of the end or goal of the system and some processes, with the acquisition and incorporation of the means to attain the end. On this count, another axis, namely, instrumental-consummatory axis, is formed. The AGL model is built on these two

dichotomous axes: (i) internal-external axis, and (ii) instrumental-consummatory axis.

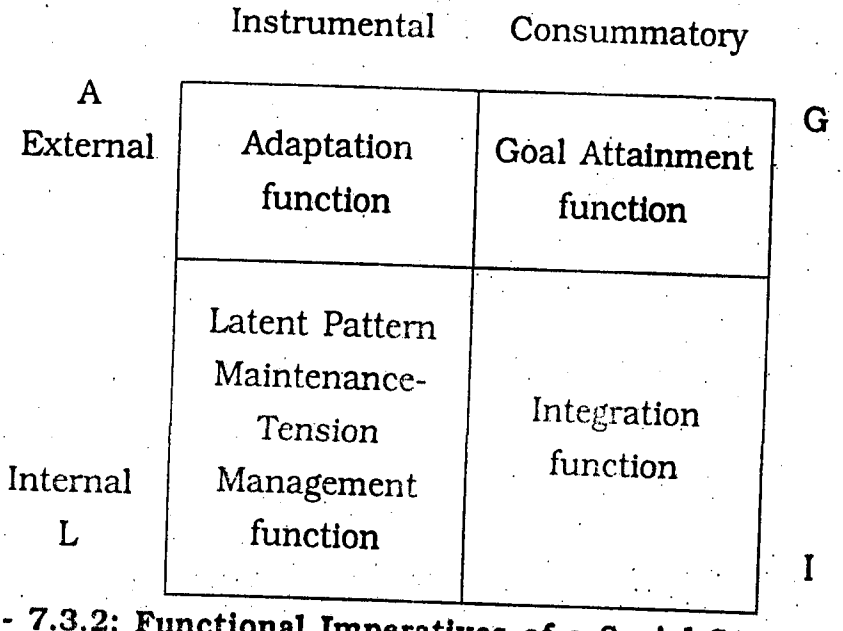


Figure - 7.3.2: Functional Imperatives of a Social System/AGIL model

Structural Components

To meet these functional prerequisites, in every social system, there are certain structures. They meet the functional needs through their units – institutions.

Economy

Parsons identifies economy as the structure meeting the need of adaptation. Economy extracts the natural resources from the environment and produces material resources out of them and distributes them to the people so that they can live their lives and carry out their responsibilities. It does this work through its organization of industry whose sole business is to manufacture material goods.

Polity

The goal attainment is associated with polity. The institutions of government operating within the polity undertake the work of organizing the achievement of collective goals. They mobilize the necessary resources and achieve the goals.

Societal Community

The societal community serves the function of integration. More specifically its units – community and cultural institutions such as organized religion, education and mass communication – serve integration. They serve it by coordinating and regulating diverse, sometimes conflicting, parts of the society and getting them to recognize and reaffirm their solidarity by emphasizing shared cultural standards. In the event of their failure with some individuals or parts, there are mechanisms of social control which operate to handle the behaviour which departs from the agreed ends and standards, thereby disrupting social relations. The legal institutions, the police and courts play prominent roles here.

Kinship

The functional prerequisite of latent pattern maintenance–tension management is met through kinship. The family handles the problem and provides the need. Being a primary socializing agency, it brings up children in the culture and ways of the society (thereby providing pattern maintenance). The relations of affection, companionship, joint participation in leisure, etc. amongst the members provide comfort, consolation and relief (thereby dealing with tension management).

Adaptation Economy (Industry)	Goal attainment Polity (Government)
Latent Pattern Maintenance Tension Management Kinship (Family)	Integration Social Community (Schools, Churches Media Organisation Legal Institutions)

Figure - 7.3.3(a) Functional Imperatives

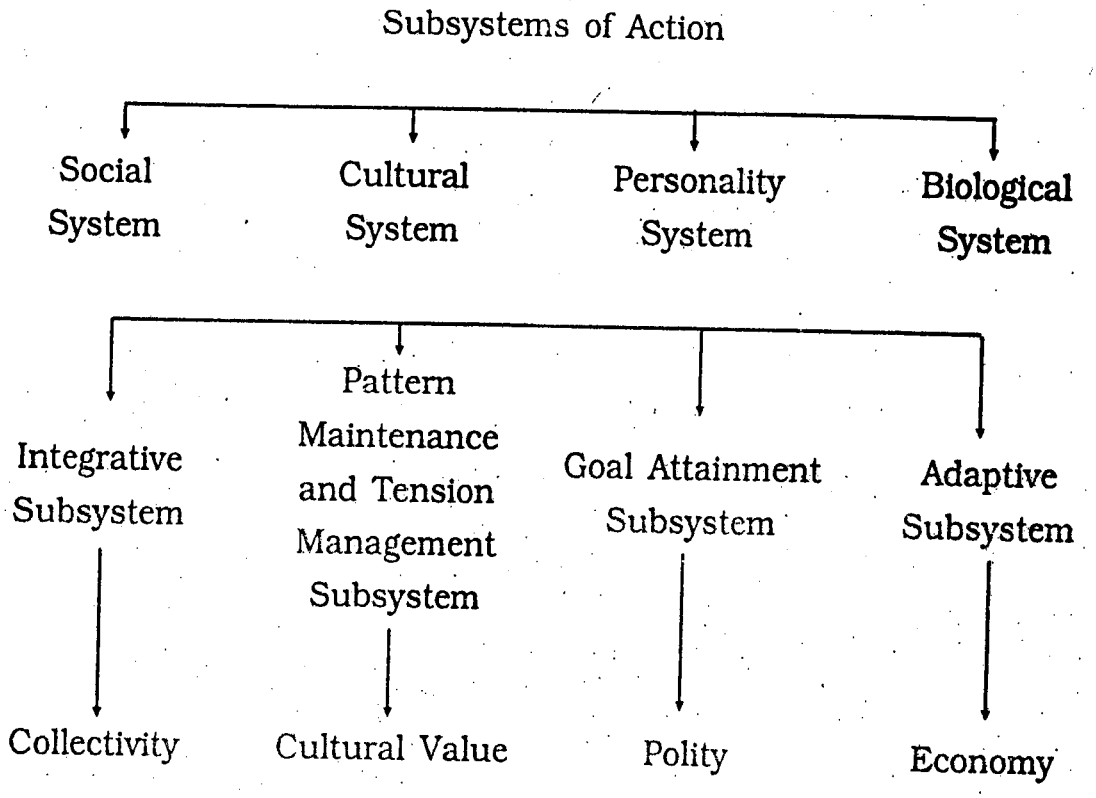


Figure - 7.3.3(b) Subsystem of Social Action

Functional Imperatives and Subsystems of Social System

Parsons usually considers society as the social system. In his view, if a social system is total, it is society. Hence he considers society as a social system. Its party are also systems, but they are subsystems – in other words, partial systems. In the above diagram, the total system (society) is pictured as a large square and the partial system (subsystems of society) are pictured as partial squares. A partial square has the same attributes as the total square does. That is, the partial systems have the same attributes as the total system does. In the same way, they have the same "system problems", that is, functional prerequisites, as the total system does. For example, the family that fulfills the larger social system's need for latent pattern maintenance-tension management, needs adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latent pattern maintenance – tension management for its survival. Parsons says that the father solves the problem of adaptation (A) by being the breadwinner. The father also makes two major decisions, thus fulfilling the goal attainment function (G) and

he plays a dominant role in coordinating and adjusting family relationships to keep the system integrated (I). The mother's chief functions are to transmit family values to the children and to create and maintain an atmosphere where tensions can be released (L).

EQUILIBRIUM

Parson's theory throws light not only on the structural functional aspects of a social system but also on another, important aspect thereof. It is equilibrium. Basically, "The idea of 'equilibrium' belongs with that of system". (Cuff, Sharrock and Francis). It implies that a system tends to remain in balance. This concept about equilibrium can be understood from the definition given by modern functionalists about "social equilibrium".

"Social equilibrium is the concept that social life has a tendency to be and to remain a functionally integrated phenomenon, so that any change in one part of the social system will bring about adjustive changes in other parts. The initial change creates an imbalance, but a functional adjustment of the part occurs to recreate an integrated, adjusted and relatively stable system" (George Theodorson and Achilles Theodorson).

Parsons tries to construct a simple model of the way equilibrium could develop in social organization, that is, in the pattern of interaction in a system, through the idea of 'shared expectations'. Parsons argues that people's inter-role relationships work because the parties to them know what the one expects of the other. For example in school situation the pupils expect that their alter, the teacher should give lessons and in turn, the teachers expect that their alter, the pupils should, correspondingly, listen to what they say and answer their questions. If the expectations of the teachers and pupils regarding one another's role match in practice, that is, if both the teachers and pupils act in conformity to the shared expectations, the pattern of their relationships would be balanced and stable.

Here socialization plays an important role in the development of equilibrium in the pattern of social relationships. In this process, people

learn the standards concerning as to how to behave in relation to others. In this way they come to internalize the rules of behaviour, get attached to them and to feel that they ought to behave in ways standardly expected.

Any departure from the standard expectations is met by negative sanctions. Parsons here makes simple assumption: people are sensitive to one another's approval and disapproval. They find the approval rewarding, disapproval punishing and seek the former and strive to avoid the latter. As long as ego acts towards alter according to the expectations, the conformity will be rewarded with positive sanctions and that will keep ego treading the right path. If ego acts towards alter in a way that does not fit with alter's expectations, then alter will respond negatively; ego, the offender will be hurt by the negative response and in future will not depart from the standard expectations. Thus people 'sanction' one another's conduct with positive and negative responses and such sanctions inhibit any tendencies to depart from expectations. If two people share expectations and conform to them in their conduct, the pattern of their relationships will be stable.

Of course, we can only theoretically conceive a society in stable equilibrium where expectations are thoroughly disseminated and exactly shared, and wherever every one acts consistently and wholly in conformity to the expectations. But real societies depart from this model. There will occur cases of deviance and norms regarding role interaction being transgressed. As a result there will be disturbance to the equilibrium in the social system. In such situation, mechanism of social control operates, contains and counteracts the tendencies towards deviance and restore the normalcy and balance.

In fact, while discussing the concept of equilibrium Parsons does not speak of stable equilibrium, but only of 'moving equilibrium' is one which does not experience any change at all. But the concept of moving equilibrium implies that equilibrium does not remain static; it will be moving. A society may be exposed to a disturbance owing to deviance. But

the disturbance is counteracted and contained by the internal mechanism of social control and the normalcy and balance are restored. Thus the concept of moving equilibrium suggests that a disturbance will occur to equilibrium at one stage. Yet the disturbance will be overcome and the balance will be restored and reestablished.

A social system operates smoothly in a condition of balance when the actors conform to the shared expectations embodied in the norms and values of the system. It is thus the norms and values that constitute the source of shared expectations and complementarity of interaction between the actors. As long as the norms and values remain as such, there will be no problem in having shared expectations and complementarity of interaction.

But a problem will arise if the norms and values change. Though a social system develops a vested interest in its norms and values and intends to preserve them because of their contribution to its integration, stability and order, the norms and values are exposed to changes at one stage. The demands of new ideas from within and need for changes in technology or the mere pressure of external factors on the system, such as changes in climate, ecology or pestilence, etc. necessitate changes in the existing norms and values and give rise to new ideas, new norms and new values. As a result of these developments, there is a confusion in the shared expectations and disruption in the pattern of social relationships.

Parsons says that even in such a situation, the social system is able to overcome the crisis and to have the equilibrium restored. Between these two points of time, that is, between the rise of crisis and restoration of equilibrium, a long-drawn process of adaptation takes place in the social system by which new ideas, new norms, new values are accepted. Parsons calls this process the process of *institutionalization*. In accord with the new ideas, new norms and new values that take roots in the context of institutionalization, the component parts of the system adjust their interrelationships with the result that equilibrium is restored.

KEY WORDS

Alter: Refers to a person in relation to whom another person plays a role. In short, the object of the role of an actor.

Complementarity of interaction: Refers to a situation in which the status-roles of two actors are oriented and played in relation to one another.

Ego: Refers to a person playing a role as a subject. In short, the subject of a role.

Equilibrium: Refers to the state in which parts of a system are in functional adjustment and balance.

Institutionalization: Process by which new ideas, new norms and new values are accepted and incorporated in the cultural system.

Moving equilibrium: Equilibrium that passes through a change.

Need-dispositions: Tendencies that drive a person to achieve the gratification of needs or desires. They are acquired and not innate.

Object role: The role a person plays as an object in relation to the other.

Orientation role: The role a person plays as a subject in relation to the other.

Role: Expected behaviour or normative behaviour attached to a status.

Social control: Refers to the restraint excercised by the society upon the individual to make them conform to the cultural patterns.

Socialization: A process by which the cultural patterns of the society are taught to the individuals so that they learn them and adapt their behaviour to them.

Status: Designated position of an individual in a social system.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Parsons classifies orientation of an actor in a situation broadly into
   (A) Cognitive orientation and cathectic orientation.
   (B) Cognitive orientation and moral orientation.
   (C) Motivational orientation and value orientation.
   (D) Appreciative orientation and evaluative orientation.
2. Parsons's pattern variable scheme is related to
   (A) *Gemeinschaft and gesellschaft* typology.
   (B) Industrial and militant society typology.
   (C) Voluntary and involuntary action typology.
   (D) Particularistic and universalistic pattern typology.
3. AGIL paradigm is connected with
   (A) Constellations of action.
   (B) Pattern variables.
   (C) Structural components.
   (D) Functional imperatives.
4. Describe the elements of action as identified by Parsons in his action theory.
5. Describe the structural components of action.
6. Describe how Parsons's pattern variable scheme serves to understand the patterns involved in action.
7. Describe the features of a social system.
8. Describe the structural-functional aspects of a social system as portrayed by Parsons.
9. Describe the mechanisms functioning in a social system for its integration.
10. Analyse the nature of equilibrium in a social system.

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UNIT - VII

ROBERT MERTON

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert King Merton (1910–) was born on 5th July 1910 of Jewish immigrant parents in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S. His father worked as a carpenter and truck driver. Merton grew up in the slums. He was a member of neighbourhood game and was often engaged in street fights. But he had a passion for knowledge and learning which he satisfied by visiting the local public library. Even at the young age of eight years, he had read widely in many fields.

After graduation from high school in 1927, he won a scholarship in Temple University. He majored in philosophy in the first year and later he switched to sociology. Before this shift to sociology, he had taken an introductory course in sociology from George C. Simpson who was teaching sociology in the University.

Merton received his B.A. degree from Temple University in 1931. He was honoured with a fellowship for graduate work at Harvard University. Merton got the opportunity here to study with such distinguished professors as Talcott Parsons, George Sarton, Pitrim Sorokin and L.H. Henderson. He took full advantage of this opportunity and excelled in his studies.

While doing doctorate work at Harvard, he met a social worker by name Suzanne M. Carhart. He married her on 8th September 1934. Soon after the marriage, he obtained Ph.D. and got appointment as instructor at Harvard. After a brief stint of service there, he joined the Faculty of Tulane University, New Orleans in 1939 and served there till 1941.

In 1941, he received an appointment at Columbia University. He became a full-fledged professor in 1947 and was named a Giddings Professor in 1963. In the meantime, he served also as an assistant director

of the University's Bureau of Applied Social Research from 1942 to 1971. At this time he worked closely with a sociologist, Paul K. Lazarsfeld who influenced him to become active in empirical research. Both of them formed a brilliant team at Columbia University from about 1941 to 1976 and provided inspiration to a number of students and scholars.

He is still working in Columbia University. He holds titles of Special Service Professor and University professor Emeritus.

Amongst Merton's major contributions, the most popular is his book *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949). In this book, he has defined the interrelationship between sociological theory and empirical research, advancing a structural-functional approach to the study of sociology and creating the concepts of manifest and latent functions, and the concept of dysfunction. Besides functional analysis, he also discussed the concept of anomie, concept of self-fulfilling prophecy, role-set theory and theory of reference group in this book. His other major publications are *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England (1938), Mass Persuasion (1946), On Theoretical Sociology (1967), Social Theory and Functional Analysis (1969), The Sociology of Science (1973).*

ETHOS OF SCIENCE

The institutional goal of science is the advance of knowledge. This knowledge is not based on assumptions. It is certified by adequate, valid and empirical evidence, which is collected by technical methods. In the employment of technical methods geared towards the collection of empirical evidence and in the presentation of the knowledge, the scientists are governed by what Merton calls "ethos of science".

The ethos of science is a complex of norms and values which is binding on the men of science. These imperatives (norms and values) fall in four sets: universalism, communism, disinterestedness, organized scepticism.

UNIVERSALISM

Universalism finds expression in the canon that science is to be wholly independent of national boundaries, races and creeds. The scientific formulations must not have particularistic orientation. Should they have a nationalistic or parochial bias, they cannot be valid. So, in the formulation of scientific truths, particularistic bias shall not find a place. This is possible only if objectivity is employed in the pursuit of knowledge and in the formulation of truths.

Here the ethos of science faces a critical situation. The institution of science is but a part of a larger social structure. When the larger culture opposes universalism and emphasizes ethnocentrism, the man of science is subjected to a conflict between the imperative of scientific universalism and that of ethnocentric particularism. The structure of the situation may force him to fall in line with the social expectation. Yet the man of science is bound to resist this pressure and to maintain universalistic orientation even in the face of threat to his stand.

Universalism finds expression in the demand that careers be open to talents. As long as the institutional goal of science is the advance of

knowledge, whoever is competent to contribute to this task shall be involved in it. To restrict the scientific careers on grounds other than lack of competence is to stifle the furtherance of knowledge. Free access to scientific pursuits is a functional imperative. When the Royal Society of London tried to exclude John Graunt, the political arithmetician, Charles II (1630-85) invoked the mores of science to reprove the society.

COMMUNISM

Communism, in the non-technical and extended sense of common ownership of goods, is a second integral element of the scientific ethos. The substantive findings of science are of course the outcome of the individual scientist's work. Yet they are assigned to the community. They constitute a common heritage in which the equity of the individual producer is severely limited. A law or theory does not enter into the exclusive possession of the producer and his heirs, nor do the mores bestow upon them special rights of use and disposition. Property rights in science are whittled down to a bare minimum by the rationale of scientific ethic. The scientist's claim to 'his' intellectual 'property' is just limited to that of recognition. His discovery is tagged with his name, for example, Copernican system, Galilean satellites, Boyle's law. Eponymy is thus at once mnemonic and a commemorative device.

The institutional conception of science as part of the public domain is linked with the imperative for communication of findings. Secrecy is the antithesis of this norm; full and open communication, its enactment. The pressure for diffusion of results is reinforced by the institutional goal of extending the boundaries of knowledge and by the incentive of recognition by the scientific fraternity which is, of course, contingent upon its publication. A scientist who does not communicate his important discoveries to the scientific fraternity - for example, Henry Cavnendish - becomes the target of criticism. He may be esteemed for his talent and perhaps, for his modesty. But institutionally considered, his modesty is seriously misplaced, in view of the moral compulsive for sharing the wealth of science. Aldous Huxley's comment on Cavnendish is illuminating in this

connection: "Our admiration of his genius is tempered by a certain disapproval; we feel that such a man is selfish and antisocial" The epithets are particularly instructive for they imply the violation of a definite institutional imperative. Even though it serves no ulterior motive, the suppression of scientific discovery is condemned.

The communal character of science is further reflected in the recognition by scientists of their indebtedness to the community. Newton's remark - "If I have seen farther it is by standing on the shoulders of giants" - expresses at once a sense of indebtedness to the community and a recognition of the essentially cooperative and cumulative quality of scientific achievement. The humility of the scientist in assigning his products to the community results from the realisation that scientific advance involves the collaboration of past and present generations.

DISINTERESTEDNESS

Science, as is the case with the professions in general, includes disinterestedness as a basic institutional element. Here disinterestedness does not mean absence of personal interest or altruistic concern with the benefit of humanity. Rather it refers to a distinctive pattern of control relating to the behaviour of scientists, that is, as to how they have to conduct themselves in their work and in relation to their lay clientele (public).

When compared with the record of other spheres of activity, virtually there is no case of fraud in the annals of science. But this does not mean that the scientists are exceptionally men of moral integrity and that they do not indulge in any kind of fraudulent thing. There is, in fact, no satisfactory evidence that such is the case, a more plausible explanation may be found in the distinctive characteristics of science itself. Involving as it does the verifiability of results, scientific research is under the exacting scrutiny of fellow-experts. The activities of scientists are subject to rigorous policing, to a degree perhaps unparalleled in any other field of activity. It is because of this in-built check in the institution of science that the

scientists maintain integrity of character. As in any field of activity, there is competition in the realm of science, competition intensified by the emphasis on priority as the criterion of achievement. Under competitive conditions there may well be generated tendencies for outbeating rivals by any means, fair or foul. But such impulses can find scant opportunity for expression in the field of scientific research, because the scientists are under the constant and rigorous policing by the compeers. Above all the dictates of socialized sentiment exercise a restraint on the scientists and prevent them from resorting to unfair means in their competitive world of activity.

Like any profession, the field of science also has clientele for actors. The scientists have the public as their clientele. But they do not stand vis-a-vis their lay clientele in the same fashion as do the physician and lawyer, for example. The possibility of exploiting the credulity, ignorance and dependence of the layman is less in the field of science. Fraud, chicane and irresponsible claims (quacking) are even less likely than among the 'service' professions. There are no abuse of expert authority and creation of pseudo-science. All these are due to a strong structure of control manned by qualified compeers.

ORGANIZED SCEPTICISM

Another institutional element of science is organized scepticism. Science tends to approach every belief, assumption or notion with scepticism. It subjects them to scrutiny in terms of empirical and logical criteria. Even if they are established and belong to the realm of the sacred, science does not mind it. For it the distinction between the sacred and the profane does not matter; everything is subject to scrutiny. It asks questions of fact concerning every aspect of nature or society and subjects it to scrutiny.

In this respect, science comes into conflict with other institutions which maintain a sacred area which is not liable for profane examination in terms of logical scrutiny and analysis. But science does not accept the

distinction between the sacred and the profane, between that which requires uncritical respect and that which can be objectively analysed. Most institutions demand unqualified faith; but the institution of science makes scepticism a virtue. Hence it subjects every notion or belief or assumption to scrutiny, whether they are concerned with the sacred or the profane.

In its activity science faces a resistance from the other institutions. They oppose the intrusion of science into their spheres. In the past, the resistance came for the most part from the church which restrains the scientific examination of sanctioned doctrines. Textual criticism of the Bible is still suspect. This resistance on the part of organized religion has become less significant as the locus of social power has shifted to economic and political institutions which show up an undisguised antagonism towards the generalized scepticism of science which is felt to challenge the bases of their stability. Their opposition to science is not only due to the fact that science tries to invalidate particular dogmas of church, economy and state, but also due to the fact thar scepticism of science threatens their power and hold in the society. They fear that scientific discoveries will create awakening among the people and destroy the halo of respect hovering around them.

It must be pointed out here that there is no logical necessity for a conflict between science which emphasizes scepticism and other institutions which demand emotional adherence. The principles of both of them are not contradictory. Yet there is a conflict between them. It is a psychological derivative. The conflict becomes accentuated whenever science extends its research to new areas towards which other institutions extend their control. In the totalitarian society, the state resorts to anti-rationalism and centralization of institutional control to limit the scope of activity of science. But science which requires autonomy resists such measure and this results in intensive conflict between the two.

KEY WORDS

Communism: Tendency to assign the scientific findings to the community.

Disinterestedness: Tendency not to indulge in fraud, chicane and quacking.

Ethnocentrism: Tendency to centre positive attitudes on own group.

Ethos: Complex of norms and values.

In-group: Group to which one belongs.

Out-group: Group to which one does not belong.

Particularism: Tendency to think in terms of a particular group and to gear the science towards its benefit only.

Scepticism: Tendency to subject every matter to scrutiny.

Universalism: Tendency to think in terms of the entire community and to gear the science towards its benefit.

THEORY OF ROLE-SET

ROLE

For the analysis of social structure, two concepts are important. They are social status and social role. Ralph Linton defines *status* as a position in a social system occupied by designated individuals and *role* as the behavioural enacting of the patterned expectations attributed to that position. According to Linton, an individual does not occupy a single status in the society. He participates in different settings in the society and thus occupies multiple statuses. Each of these statuses has its associated role. Thus in his view, a status involves a single role.

ROLE-SET

But Robert Merton here disagrees with Linton. He notes that a particular social status involves, not a single associated role, but an array of associated roles. He registers this fact by a distinctive term *role-set*. By role-set Merton means "complement of role relationships which persons have by virtue of occupying a particular social status".

According to Merton, a status does not involve a single role. It involves an array of roles which complement one another. Thus, for instance, a person in the status of medical student plays not only the role of a student in relation to his teachers, but also an array of other roles relating diversely to others in the system: other students, nurses, physicians, social workers, medical technicians. Again the status of school teacher has its distinctive role-set, relating the teacher to his pupils, to colleagues, the headmaster, and correspondent, the Board of Education, professional organizations, Parent-Teachers Association, and the life.

Merton's Concept

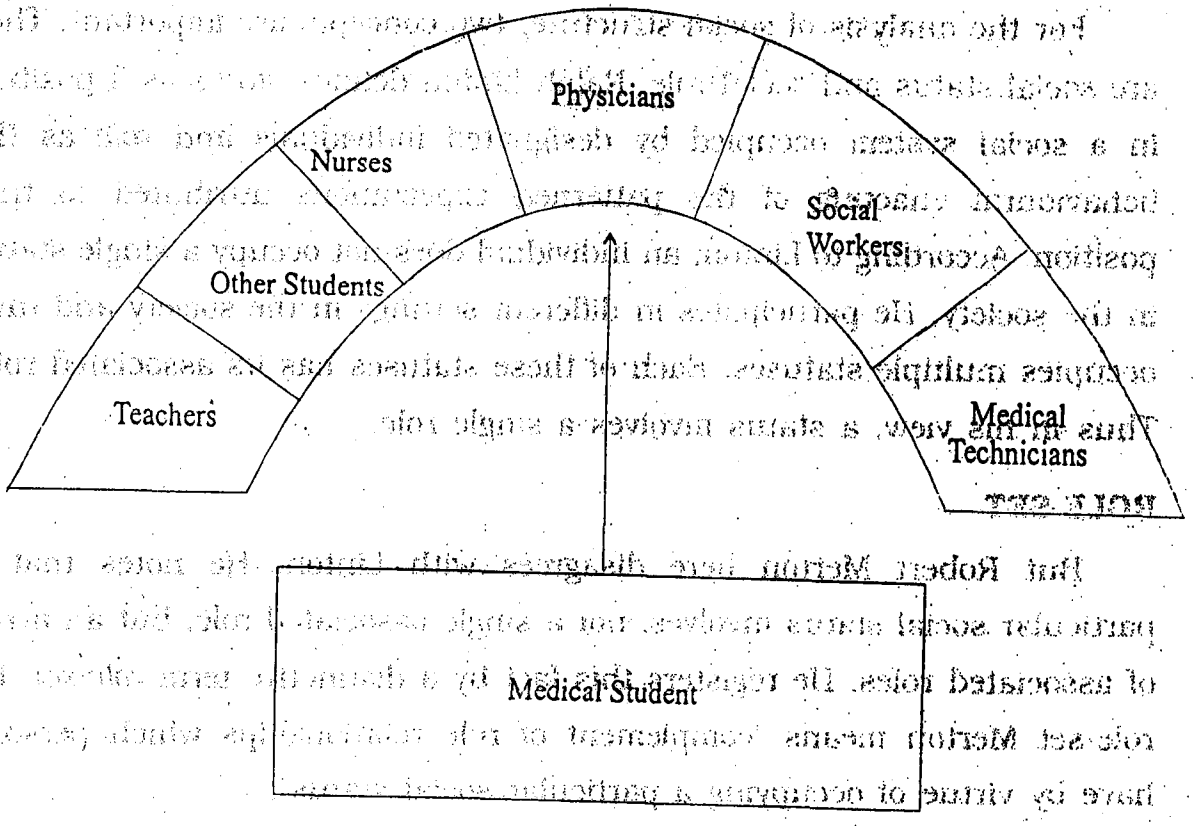


Figure – 8.2.1: Concept of Role

MULTIPLE ROLES

It should be plain that the role-set differs from what sociologists have long described as 'multiple roles'. The term 'multiple roles' refers to the complex of roles associated, not with a *single* status, but with the *various* statuses (in different institutional spheres) in which the individuals find themselves - for example, one person might have diverse statuses of husband, father, teacher, physician, a colony resident, an association member and so on. Merton designates this complement of distinctive statuses of a person *status-set*, each of the statuses in turn having its

distinctive role-set. In the given example, at least four statuses are presented, each linked to a different role-set. First, the individual occupies the status of "husband" Corresponding to this status is a role-set that includes his behaviour towards his wife (which we might call the "conjugal role") and his responsibilities in supporting the family ("the familial role"). Second he also holds the status of "father". Part of this role-set is the care of the children (the "paternal role") and activities in such organisations as Parent-Teachers Association (the "civic role"). Third, as a colony resident, he interacts with co-residents (the "co-resident role") and represents the colony needs to the civic authorities (the "citizen role"). Fourth as a teacher, he interacts with students (the "teaching role") as well as with other teachers (the "colleague role"). Fifth, as an association member, he interacts with the association members (the "co-member role") as well as with the school management (the"unionist role").

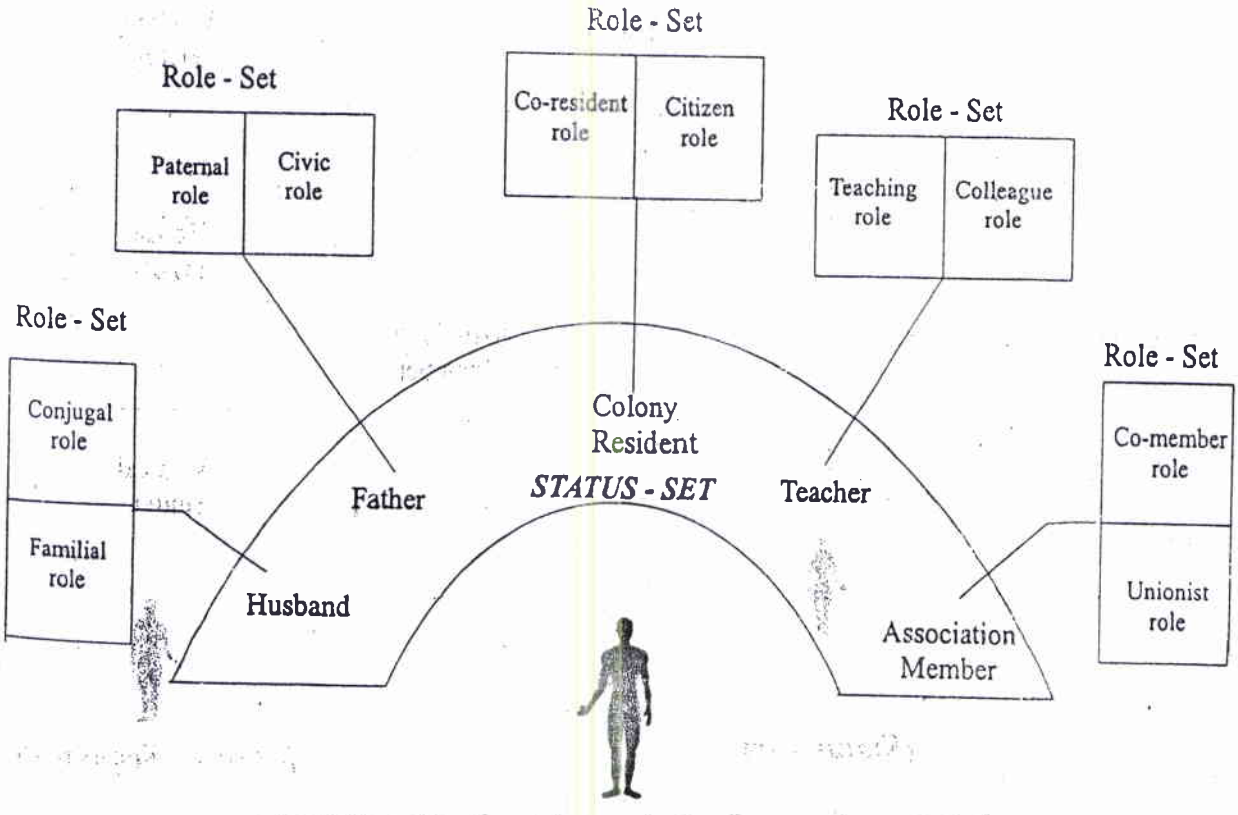


Figure – 8.2.2: Status-set and Role-set

(*Note:* The Fig. 8.2.2 is, of course, a partial listing of this individual's status-set and role-set; a person generally occupies dozens of statuses at one time, each linked to a role-set).

When distinctive statuses occur in succession, that is, in a sequence, with sufficient frequency, Merton designates such sequence as a *status-sequence*, as in the case, for example, of students, house surgeon, resident doctor and independent medical practitioner. While the status-set refers to a complement of distinctive statuses held by an individual in different settings, status-sequence refers to a complement of distinctive statuses held by an individual in succession in the same setting. In the former case, the individual has different sets of alters in each status, in the latter case, he has the same set of alters in each status.

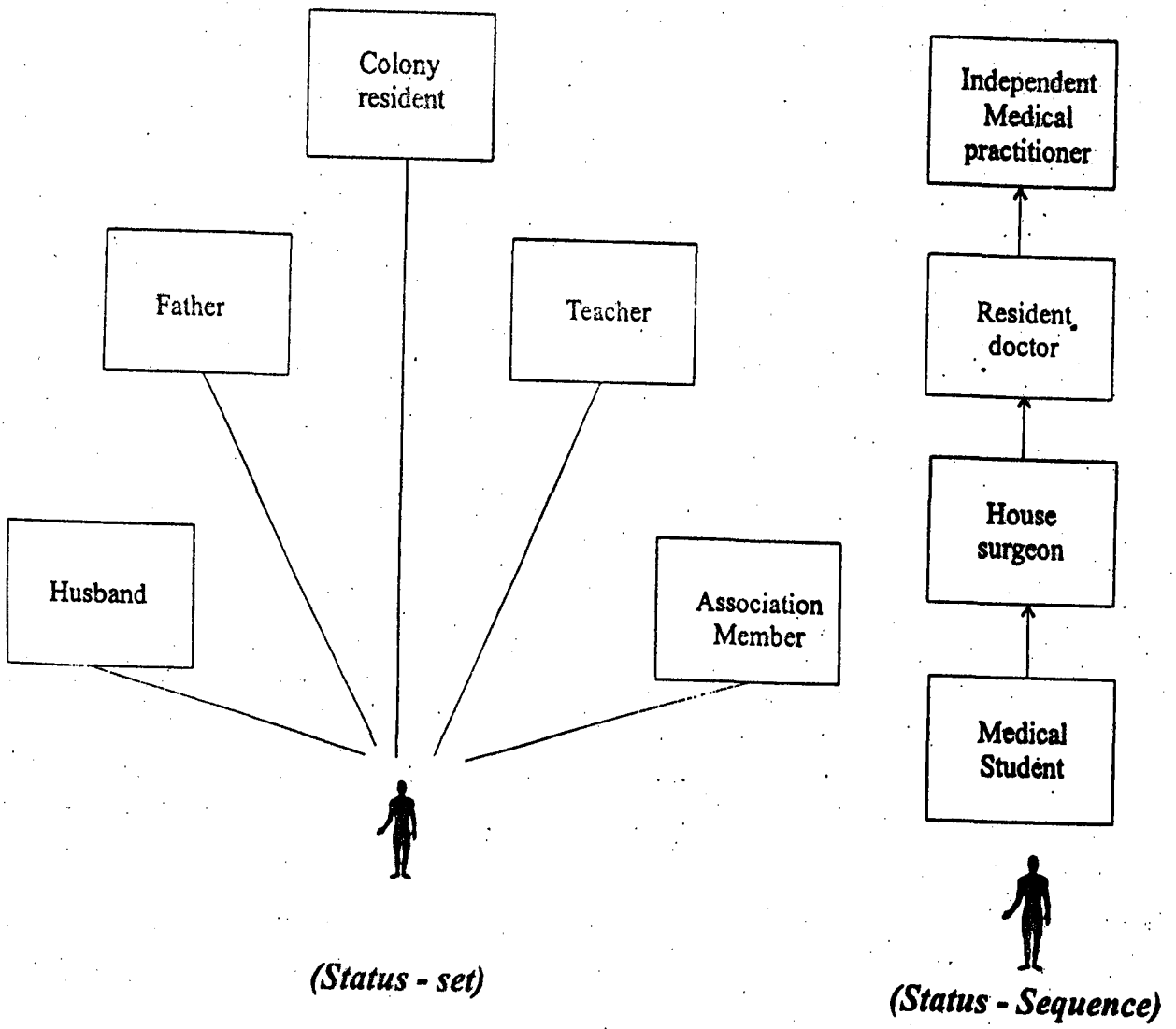


Figure – 8.2.3: Status-set and Status-sequence

In much of the same sense, Merton says, we can observe *sequence of status-sets* and *sequence of role-sets*.

CONFLICT IN THE ROLE-SET

The role-set as the term implies, involves many role partners who are differentially located in social structure. In some measure, these role-partners have their own values and role-expectations which differ from one to another. For example, in the case of a school teacher, his role-partners, namely, school correspondent, professional colleagues and at times, the headmaster may have their own values and role expectations differing from one another. The individual teacher may thus be readily subject to conflicting role-expectations among his role-partners. The disparate and inconsistent expectations complicate the task of the teacher coming to terms with them. What holds for the teacher holds, in varying degree, for the other status-occupants also.

Such a situation appears to be the major structural source of disturbance in the role-set. If all the role-partners in the role-set have the same values and role-expectations, such disturbance will not occur. But as societies are highly differentiated and as the role-partners are drawn from diverse social statuses with, to some degree, correspondingly different social values, there is no consensus among the role-expectations. As a result, the role-set is disturbed. When the role-set is thus disturbed, it will result in structural disorder. However, in practice, we find that a substantial degree of order is maintained in the social structure, that is, role-sets are saved from potential disturbance. This is due to the fact that there are certain social mechanisms through which roles in the role-sets become articulated so that conflict among them becomes less than it would otherwise be. Such mechanisms are given below.

Social Mechanisms for the Articulation of Roles in the Role-Set

1. The Mechanism of Differing Intensity of Role-Involvement among those in the Role-Set: In a role-set of a person, the role-partners may have differing expectations. In such a situation, the status-occupant will find it a problem to come to terms with them all. For example, the parents of children in a school and the members of a local welfare organization who have no children in the school may be concerned with the work and conduct of

the teachers. The values and role-expectations of the parents and of the local welfare organization may be at odds in numerous respects and may call for quite different behaviour on the part of the teacher. In such a situation, the teacher cannot conform to these disparate expectations.

However, he can manage such a delicate situation. It is plain that the role-expectations of the role-partners in a role-set are not maintained with the same degree of intensity. For the one group, the expectations are central for the other group, the expectations are peripheral. The teacher may then emit differentials in involvement in the relationship with the diverse role-partners, that is, greater involvement in the relationship with the group for whom the role-relationship is of central significance and less involvement in the relationship for whom the role-relationship is of peripheral significance.

2. *The Mechanism of Difference in the Power of those Involved in the Role-Set:* A second factor which affects the stability of the role-set is distribution of power. Normally the members of a role-set are not apt to be equally powerful in shaping the behaviour of a status-occupant. Some may be more powerful and others less powerful. Yet both parties have their own expectations in respect of the status-occupant. Though there is a likelihood that the more powerful can outweigh the less powerful in imposing their expectations upon the less powerful, the former do not uniformly succeed in outstripping the less powerful. Should only one member of the role-set have an effective monopoly of power either to the exclusion of all others or outweighing the combined power of others, he can succeed uniformly in imposing his expectations upon the status-occupant. Failing this special situation and if there is no greater inequality between the role-partners in respect of the amount of power, both the more powerful and the less powerful tend to vie with one another in imposing their expectations upon the status-occupant. If their role-expectations are disparate and inconsistent, the status occupant is subject to role conflict.

In such a situation of role conflict, the status-occupant can create a coalition of lesser powers by combining them. This coalition among the less powerful can act as a counterpoise to the more powerful in the role-set and neutralize the power position. In such a situation, as the power struggle goes on between the members of the role-set, the status-occupant has relative freedom to proceed. When the father's decision is offset by the mother's decision, the child can go freely.

3. The Mechanism of Insulating Role-Activities from Observability by Members of the Role-Set: The social standards of role-behaviour require that a status-occupant play his role in an observable manner. When the role-partners have conflicting expectations, in such a situation the status-occupant is observable by the partners and will be subject to competing pressures. But if the role-performance of the status-occupant is insulated from direct observation by some partners of his role-set, he will not be uniformly subject to competing pressures.

The social structure itself provides a mechanism here to insulate parts of the role-behaviour from ready observability by all members of the role-set. The status of a university teacher provides an example in this respect. The norm which holds that what is said in the class-rooms of universities is privileged, in the sense that it is restricted to the teacher and his students, enables the teacher to have autonomy of role. If the role of the teacher in the class-room is open to observation by all those comprising the members of the role-set of the teacher, it will affect the free flow of the teacher and serve to lower the level of instruction. For this reason, the teacher is exempted from observability by all and sundry who may wish to impost their will upon him.

The concept of privileged information and confidential communication in the professions – law medicine, teaching and ministry–has the same function of insulating their role behaviour in relation to their clients from ready observability by others in their role-set. If the facts of all role-behaviour of the physician and the priest in relation to their clients

were freely available to anyone, they could not adequately discharge their functions. What is called the "need for privacy" -- that is, insulation of actions from surveillance by others - is guaranteed for them in the social structure. However, a status-occupant who is totally exempt from observation by peers and superiors may fail to live up to the minimum requirements of his status. The physician in his private practice who is largely exempt from the judgement of competent colleagues may allow his role-performance to sink below tolerable standards. The secret policeman may violate the values of the society.

All this means that some measure of observability of role performance by members of the role-set is necessary. If the social requirements of accountability to the effect that some measure of insulation from observability is also required for the effective operation of social structure. Instead, the two statements, taken together, hold that while there is autonomy of role-performance, there must be some optimum observability which will make for accountability of role-performance.

4. The Mechanism of Making for Observability by Members of the Role-Set of Their Conflicting Demands upon the Occupants of Status: As long as the members of a role-set are ignorant that their demands upon the status-occupants are incompatiable, each member may press his own case upon the status-occupant. But when demands of some of them are in full contradiction with the demands of others, it becomes the task of the status-occupant, to resolve these contradictions either by monopolizing power or by compromise. If they engage in struggle for power, then the pressure upon the status-occupant becomes temporarily relieved.

If such a situation does not arise and if there is a "pluralistic ignorance" on the part of the members in the role-set about the conflicting nature of their demands, the status- occupant himself can act as the *tertius gaudens*, the third party and point out to them the conflicting nature of their demands and make them resolve their contradictory demands. As long as each member in the role-set is ignorant of the contradiction between

his demands and demands of others, he will be bent upon his demands only. If the status-occupant makes the members of the role-set understand the contradiction in their demands on him, it will enable them to redefine what can properly be expected of him.

5. The Mechanism of Social Support by Others in Similar Social Statuses with Similar Difficulties of Coping with an Unintegrated Role-Set: The occupant of a social status is usually not alone. There are others more or less like-circumstanced. So, when there is a problem of confronting conflicting role-expectations among the members in a role-set, it is usually not a private problem. The problem is shared by those who are like-circumstanced. So, those who occupy the same social status form organizations among themselves and counter the power of the members of the role-set. Occupational and professional associations thus constitute a structural response to the problem of coping with the conflicting demands by those in the role-set.

Such organizations form professional codes which define what the behaviour of the status-occupant should be. The codes serve to eliminate those demands judged illegitimate in terms of the codes and to indicate which actions the status-occupant should take while confronted with conflicting demands. By these functions, the codes provide support to the status-occupants who are vulnerable to pressures from those in the role-set, especially when they are isolated. The journalists who are frequently subject to censorial pressures receive strong support from the code on writing developed by their union.

6. Abridging the Role-Set: Sometimes to cope with the incompatible demands by the members of the role-set, the status-occupants break off certain role-relationships, leaving a consensus of role-expectations among those that remain. But this mode of adaptation is possible only under limited conditions. It can be utilized only in those circumstances where it is still possible for the status-occupant to perform his role without the support of those with whom he discontinues relations.

However this option is by and large not easy, since the role-relationship is not so much a matter of personal choice as a matter of social structure in which the status is embedded. Under these conditions, the only option for the status-occupant is that he can quit the status rather than removing the role-set.

KEY WORDS

Multiple roles: A complex of roles associated with various statuses.

Pluralistic ignorance: Ignorance of the members in a role-set about the conflicting nature of their demands on a status-occupant.

Role conflict: A situation in which conflicting demands come from partners in a role-set.

Role-Set: An array of roles associated with a status.

Sequence of role-sets: A complex of role-sets associated with statuses occurring in succession.

Sequence of status-sets: A complex of distinctive status-sets occurring in succession.

Status-sequence: A complex of statuses occurring in succession.

Status-set: A complex of distinctive statuses held by a person in different settings.

REFERENCE GROUP THEORY

Sociologists are used until recently to highlight the influences, upon the members, of the groups to which they belong. They have almost neglected the non-membership groups and failed to note that they too, like membership groups, have influences upon man. George Herbert Mead had advanced a hypothesis that the individuals make self-evaluation and form attitudes only with reference to their membership groups.

Many a sociologist did not think that non-membership groups too can act as frames of reference for the individuals for self-evaluation and attitude formation. Indeed they held a notion that individuals would be indifferent or hostile towards the non-membership groups. Sumner was of the opinion that the relation of the individual in the we-group, or in-group (ie membership group) would be one of comradership and peace and the relation of the individual to others-groups or out-groups (i.e. non-membership groups) would be one of hostility and war. "The insiders in a we-group are in a relation of peace, order, law, government and industry, to each other. Their relation to all outsiders, or others-groups, is one of war and plunder . . . "

But Merton notices that non-membership groups or out-groups also have influence on the individuals. In this connection, he has formulated a theory and the theory is known as Reference Group Theory.

Reference group is a group which is taken as a frame of reference for self-evaluation and attitude formation. The individual shapes his attitudes, evaluations and behaviour by referring to such group.

The concept of reference group was initially introduced by Herbert H. Hyman in his study, *The Psychology of Status* (1942). It was later developed by Sherif and Newcomb. Merton also joined them and contributed his share to the development of reference group theory. For his contribution, he

draws mainly upon the findings of the researches in *The American Soldier* by Samuel A. Stouffer and his associates.

Merton says that both the membership groups or in-groups and the non-membership groups or out-groups act as points of reference for the individual for shaping his attitudes, evaluations and behaviour. The reference groups thus taken are almost innumerable. But the membership groups are comparatively few, whereas the non-membership groups are legion. The latter wield a greater influence upon the individual by acting as frames of reference in a number of matters.

Merton says that the individual generally tends to look up to his membership groups for evaluating his achievements, role performance, and aspirations and ambitions. The membership groups provide contexts for the individual to compare himself with his associates and to make self-evaluation. But when the membership groups exert diverse and conflicting pressures for self-evaluation, Merson says, the individual tends to adopt other, non-membership groups as a frame of reference.

FUNCTIONAL TYPES OF REFERENCE GROUPS

The reference groups serve two kinds of functions. One, they set standards for the behaviour of the individual. The individual takes the standards and value judgements of the reference groups and shapes his attitudes and behaviour in accordance with them. Such reference groups Merton calls "normative" reference groups.

Two, the reference groups provide a frame of comparison relative to which the individual evaluates himself and others. They provide a context for evaluating the relative position of the individual and others. Such reference groups Merton calls "comparative" reference groups.

Normative Reference Groups

When the individual is attracted to a non-membership group and regards its standards and behaviour patterns as the model ones for shaping his attitudes and behaviour, he aspires to become member in it. Here,

according to Merton, the individual's desire to join a non-membership group is prompted by his notion that membership in such a group can confer some prestige on him. He thinks that by joining such a group and adopting its values and life styles, he can gain a prestige in the institutional structure of society. It is for this reason that he looks up to it and desires to join it.

As the first step in the realization of the aspiration to become a member in the non-membership group, the individual resorts to anticipatory socialization, that is, takes on the values and life-styles of the reference group and follows them. This conformity to the norms of the reference group, of course, signifies a positive orientation to it. However, at the same time it is equivalent to non-conformity, that is, non-conformity to the norms of the in-group. By all accounts allegiance to the contrasting norms of another group means defection from the norms of the in-group. And accordingly, the in-group reacts in such situation by putting social restraints upon such orientation to non-group norms.

Above all, anticipatory socialization will become functional for the individual and his aspiration will possibly be realized only when the social structure is relatively open providing for mobility. For only in such a structure, change from one group to another is possible. Should the social structure be relatively closed shutting mobility, the anticipatory socialization will become dysfunctional. The individual would not get acceptance by the group to which he aspires and might probably lose acceptance, because of the out-group orientation, by the group to which he belongs.

Even if the aspiration to membership in the non-membership reference group is frustrated, the aspirant individual does not give up conformity to the norms of the reference group. He strives to be like the reference group and in this direction, he assimilates the standards and behaviour patterns of the reference group.

Shouffer and his associates found that many U.S. Army replacements (soldiers who had just joined a combat unit) moved from the civilian-like values towards the more tough-minded values of the veterans. As the replacements are a subordinate group in the Army, they did not have independent prestige. This they compensated by the assimilation of the values of the veterans. By doing this, they strove to find acceptance by the higher-status group of veterans.

When the individual has thus a positive orientation to a reference group and shows an aspiration to membership into it or strives to be like it by assimilating its norms and values, such a reference group is called "positive reference group". Newcomb here adds a negative type of reference group. In the case of the positive type of reference group, the individual assimilates the norms of the reference group and strives to be like it. But, on the contrary, if he rejects the norms of a group and strives, to be unlike it by forming and following counter-norms, such reference group is called "negative reference group". In short, the positive reference group involves the motivated assimilation of the norms by the group. The negative reference group involves the motivated rejection, i.e. not merely the non-acceptance of the norms of the group but the formation of counter-norms.

The whites in the U.S. furnish an enlightening illustration in this respect. The whites constitute a higher-status group in relation to the Negroes, especially the Negroes in the south. So they strive to remain *unlike* the Negroes. The whites not only compare their status with that of the Negroes, but strive to preserve the difference. For it is because of the difference that the Negroes look up to them as a reference group. If this difference goes, the whites could lose their status without losing their white skin. Consequently they strive to distinguish themselves from the Negroes by retaining the privileges they have. Also by avoiding the giving of the names which the Negroes give their children, the whites try to maintain their difference from the Negroes. As a result of taking the Negroes as a

negative reference group, the whites thus strive to perpetuate the difference they have from the Negroes and thereby obtain the conferral of superiority.

Merton says that not only the non-membership group but also the former membership group is apt to be taken as a negative reference group. The former members of a group, he says, are apt to be motivated not only to alienate themselves from it but also to be hostile towards it. They convert their (old) group into a negative reference group. They rigidly reject the norms of the group and repudiate it. They show hostility towards it rather than indifference. They are more hostile towards it than their new found associates. Michels reports that the "renegade" is both more devoted to his new group affiliates and more hostile to the group he has left than all the people traditionally affiliated with his new group. The revolutionary of bourgeoise origins, he suggests, is more violent in his opposition to the bourgeoise than are his fellow-revolutionaries of the proletarian origins.

Comparative Reference Groups

Even when there is no striving to be like or unlike the reference group or to get admitted into it, comparison with the reference group is quite common. It facilitates the self-evaluation.

But comparison with the reference group is not blindly made. Comparison is made only upon perceiving or imagining some similarity in status attributes between the individual and the reference group. Once this minimal similarity obtains, other similarities and differences pertinent to the situation will provide the context for making comparison and shaping evaluations. Thus the grade-school soldiers compare themselves with the friends of the same status (i.e. same educational level). The married soldiers compare their lot with that of the like-statused individuals such as married civilian friends and unmarried associates in the Army.

For comparison, it is not necessary that the individual should be or have been in actual social relations with the reference group. Even with the impersonal status categories, he can make comparison. Whether the individual has been in relations with the reference group or not, he must

have some knowledge of the situation in which the comparative reference group members find themselves.

The individual tends to take quite often multiple reference groups for comparison. In such situation, the reference groups provide contexts for the individuals to make self-evaluations. Sometimes the contexts they provide operate at cross purposes and as a result, the reference groups appear to be conflicting ones.

Stouffer and his associates observed in their study of *The American Soldier* that the overseas American soldiers felt "worse off" with reference to the soldiers at home. Relative to the soldiers at home, the overseas soldiers suffered a break with home ties and deprivation of many of the amenities of life in the U.S. to which they were accustomed. So, relative to the soldiers at home, they felt deprived and "worse off". But, on the other hand, they felt "better off" with reference to combat soldiers. They did not face any such risk or threat of risk of life as the combat soldiers faced. Hence, they felt "better off" relative to the combat soldiers and had a satisfaction. Thus the overseas soldiers had two reference groups which conflicted with one another by providing conflicting contexts.

Similarly the Negro soldiers stationed in the northern U.S. had higher morale than the Negro soldiers stationed in the southern U.S. where the Negroes were generally treated as inferior. But they had relative deprivation by comparing with the Negro civilians in the North, many of whom had a relatively high-paying job in war industries, freedom from regimentation and combat risk.

Likewise, with reference to the Negro civilians in the South, the Negro soldiers stationed there felt that they had, "a position of comparative wealth and dignity". But with reference to the northern Negroes, they felt "worse off".

Sometimes the reference groups taken by the individual for comparison and self-evaluation provide contexts which are mutually sustaining. Such

groups, termed by Merton as mutually sustaining reference groups, provide contexts which sustain one another. They induce similar feelings in the individual and not different feelings as conflicting reference groups do.

Stouffer and his associates noted in their study that comparing themselves with their unmarried associates in the Army, the married men over 20 years of age in the U.S. Army felt that induction into Army demanded greater sacrifices from them than from the unmarried associates. Also comparing themselves with their married civilian friends, they felt that they had been called on for sacrifices which they were escaping altogether. Thus both reference groups provided similar contexts for the married men which induced similar feeling - sense of deprivation.

USEFULNESS OF THE REFERENCE GROUP THEORY

Definition: The reference group theory serves to understand many things for which no adequate definition is available. One such thing is deprivation.

Common-sense assumptions or explanations suggest that the feelings of happiness or deprivation are absolute. They state that greater the actual loss experienced by a family in a mishap, the more actually it will be deprived. This belief is based upon the unexamined assumption that the subjective appraisal of a loss is linearly related to the magnitude of the objective loss.

But Merton holds a view that the feelings of happiness or deprivation are relative. In this view the extent to which the people are satisfied or dissatisfied with their lives does not depend so much on their actual life conditions, but rather on how they are doing *as compared with others.* Some people who earn 50,000 dollars feel poor (deprived). Others who earn 10,000 dollars a year feel well off. These feelings are due to comparison. As an illustration to this point the writer Leo Rosten reports a case of a Hollywood movie writer who earned 50,000 dollars a year but felt poor. Though this amount was in no way insufficient, the writer felt poor because he was comparing himself with movie stars who made a lot more than he did.

Thus Merton's relative deprivation theory leads to a quite different hypothesis that the self-appraisals of the loss by the people are not related to the magnitude of the objective loss but to their comparison of their own situation with that of other people perceived as being comparable to themselves. This theory therefore suggests that under specifiable conditions, families suffering serious losses will feel *less* deprived than those suffering smaller losses if they are in situations leading them to compare themselves to people suffering even more severe losses. Thus the relative deprivation theory indicates that objective conditions are not as important as subjective perceptions dependent upon comparison with one's reference group.

Inexplicable Patterns of Behaviour

The concept of reference groups can sometimes help us to explain the seemingly inexplicable patterns of behaviour. Stouffer and his associates who conducted the study of the American soldier interviewed three different groups of soldiers - experienced combat veterans, replacements, and new recruits into the Army. When they asked these three groups questions about how willing they were to enter combat, they found the combat veterans and replacements the least willing and the new recruits the most willing. However, when they asked the soldiers whether they felt confident to lead a combat unit, the researchers found the combat veterans and replacements most confident and the recruits the least confident. To understand the influence of reference groups in this situation, we need to ask why the replacements were most like the combat veterans on one question and least like them on the other.

The concept of reference group can help explain this pattern of responses. The experienced combat veterans were a reference group for the replacements. The replacements looked up to and admired the men who had already been in combat, and their attitudes were influenced by those of the veterans. The veterans thought that combat was hell. So they played down the heroic aspects of combat. According to the veterans, only an insane man would want to enter combat. The replacements following the

attitudes of their reference group, displayed little willingness for combat. The new recruits, who had not been exposed to combat veterans, still had the popular stereotype of combat and expressed more hung ho attitudes.

On the other question, that of confidence in ability to lead a combat unit, the replacements were again influenced by their reference group.The combat unit was developed through actual combat experience. The replacements had adopted their belief and made use of it in their self-evaluation. The new recruits not having been exposed to combat veterans, were more cocky about their abilities. In both cases, the attitudes of the replacements were strongly influenced by their reference group-the combat veterans.

KEY WORDS

Anticipatory socialization: A process by which a person follows the norms and values of another group anticipating that such practice will enable him to join and participate in it.

Comparative reference group : A group which a person takes as a frame of reference for comparison and self-evaluation.

Conflicting reference groups: Reference groups which provide conflicting contexts for comparison. They induce different feelings in the individual. Person shows a negative orientation or hostility. He will strive to be unlike it in all possible ways.

Normative reference group : A group whose standards and value judgements are regarded by an individual as the model ones for shaping his attitudes and behaviour.

Positive reference group : A reference group towards which a person shows a positive orientation. He will aspire to join it or strive to be like it by following its values and norms.

FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

At the time of the twentieth century, a new approach of sociological interpretation of the social or cultural items emerged in the field of sociological theory. It was *functionalism.* Since its emergence, it has become increasingly popular as the principal mode of sociological analysis. It attempts to explain the social or cultural items by their functions, that is, by the contribution they make to the functioning of the total social or cultural system.

POSTULATES OF FUNCTIONALISM

The socio-cultural anthropologists made great contributions to the development of functionalism. Particularly Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown made notable contributions to functionalism by way of proposition of three interconnected postulates, known as postulates of functionalism. Merton reviews those three postulates and criticizes and modifies them as follows:

1. Postulate of the Functional Unity of Society: Based on biological analogy, this postulate views society as a well-integrated and consistent whole. Radcliffe-Brown maintains that the total social system has certain kind of unity, that is, functional unity. Malinowski also says that culture is an integrated whole having a functional unity.

This postulate maintains that the social or cultural system is integrated and has a functional unity because all the elements of the system contribute to its maintenance and integration. Radcliffe-Brown notes that the social system has a functional unity because "all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency, i.e., without producing persistent conflicts which can neither be resolved nor regulated". He maintains that every social usage contributes to the functioning of the social system. Malinowski also says that all standardized practices and beliefs are functional and contribute to

the integration of culture as a whole. He goes one step further and says that standardized practices and beliefs are functional for each individual member of society in the sense that they contribute to their biological and mental welfare.

Merton questions the assumption that every society is always integrated and has functional unity. He says that if it is said that all human societies *must have some degree* of integration, it is a quite different thing. It is not open to debate. It is just a matter of definition. But if it is said that all societies have high degree of integration, it is open to debate. The empirical fact is that not all societies have high degree of integration in which every standardized social or cultural belief or practice is functional for the society as a whole and uniformly functional for the people living in it. The societies vary in the degree of integration – some poorly integrated, some highly integrated.

Merton adds that if one would look beyond the biological analogy which constitutes the basis for the assumption of functional unity, one would find out the inadequacy of the assumption. "For we find significant variations in the degree of integration even among individual biological organisms, although the common sense assumption would tell us that here, surely, all the parts of the organism would work toward a "unified end". Parker endorses this Merton's observation and says that 'Many of (the) more loosely organized animals are so poorly integrated that different parts may be in active opposition to each other. Thus when an ordinary starfish is placed on its back, part of the arms may attempt to turn the animal in one direction, while others work to turn it in the opposite way . . . " Merton is of the opinion that what holds good in the above case holds equally good in the case of the society also. He says that such opposite tendencies are found in the society. While some elements work towards the integration of the society, others work in the opposite way.

Anthropologists maintain that the primitive societies are solid, homogeneous and integrated. But Merton is of the opinion that this is all

a mere exaggeration. He says that even if such a conception has merits as a working hypothesis for anthropologists doing field work in fairly "homogeneous" little communities, its application to modern complex societies characterized by functional specialization, structural differentiation and rational bureaucracy, is of doubtful value. Moreover social integration is no longer given, but a problem to be investigated.

2. Postulate of Universal Functionalism: This postulate holds that all standardized social or cultural forms have positive functions. Nineteenth century anthropologists assumed that every continuing social pattern or custom must have positive functions contributing to the maintenance of the system and dubbed as 'survivals' any patterns whose functions could not be readily identified. Typical is Malinowski's contention that "in every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea and belief fulfils some vital function . . . " But Merton questions the validity of this assertion. He argues that not all social or cultural form are functional. Some social or cultural forms may be dysfunctional.

By *functions*, Merton means "those observed consequences which make for adaptation or adjustment of a given system" and by *dysfunctions*, "those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system". In other words, the term *function* refers to the contribution of a social or cultural form to the maintenance or integration of the system and the term, *dysfunction*, the consequence which affects the maintenance or integration of the system. While "function" refers to the positive contribution, "dysfunction" refers to the negative consequence.

Merton's concept of dysfunctions involves two complementary but distinct ideas. The *first* is that something may have consequences that are generally dysfunctional, that is, an item may have consequence which affect the maintenance or integration of the system. The *second* is that an item may be functional for some persons or under certain circumstances and dysfunctional for others or under certain other circumstances.

An excellent example of what Merton means by generally dysfunctional consequences can be found in his own discussion of bureaucracy. On the whole bureaucracy appears as a functional institution for industrial society in that it provides a rationally organized and technically efficient system of administration free from personalized relationships and non-rational considerations. However, Merton's understanding of dysfunctions makes him aware of what may happen when adherence to bureaucratic rules becomes an end in itself - a situation he calls "ritualism" in his theory of deviance. He illustrates this aspect of bureaucracy with a pathetic incident involving Bernt Balchen, a Norwegian who applied for U.S. citizenship.

Balchen had applied for citizenship in the U.S. in 1927. As per the rules of the department of labour, one who applies for U.S. citizenship must have put in at least five years of continuous residence in the States. Balchen had been on the muster roll of an American company called Byrd Company which was engaged in an exploration work in the antarctic region. He was employed in a ship engaged by the company for the exploration work and the ship carried the American flag. Balchen was employed in that ship and engaged in the exploration work. The exploration work was conducted in a region called little America to which there was an American claim because of the exploration and occupation of it by Americans. Though Balchen worked for America in that region for more than five years, the bureau of naturalization refused to entertain his application on the ground that though Little America was claimed by the States, since the claim was not settled in the international law, Little America could not be considered a part of the American soil. "So far as the bureau is concerned, Balchen was out of the country and *technically* has not complied with the law of naturalization".

Although adherence to the rules is ordinarily a moral and social "good" and therefore "functional" for society, in this case, it was dysfunctional not only for Balchen but also for "society" , because the rigidity resulted in the loss of a superb person as a citizen. Merton's knowledge of general dysfunction makes him aware of the "dark underside" of bureaucracy which

is not generally exposed by functionalism. Merton agrees with Weber on the merit of bureaucracy that it is an efficient, "rational" way of dealing with problems, necessary to a modern state and to the end of feudalism. Yet, he perceives it to be prospectively tyrannical because of its inflexible ritualism, its insistence on rules for everything. In this respect, Merton is close to the neo-Marxist conflict theorist, Habermas who sees rationalistic bureaucracy as an impressive technical development that threatens human freedom.

Merton's second point – that an institution need not be generally functional or dysfunctional, but may instead be functional for some people and groups and dysfunctional for others – is an even clearer shift away from functionalism which implies the approval of status quo. Merton says that people commonly think of marriage and family life as crucial to the "health of society". Yet these institutions may not be functional for some types of individuals at all. Again, as functionalists from Durkheim onwards have tended to emphasize, institutionalized religion may help to integrate a society by creating common values and identification with the group. However, Merton points out, religion is hardly functional for dissidents who are the victims of an Inquisition; and religious conflicts and wars are dysfunctional for large segments of the societies involved.

The concept of dysfunctions is central to Merton's functional analysis. It serves as a guideline for contemporary functional analysis. His emphasis that "social usages or sentiments may be functional for some groups and dysfunctional for others in the same society" serves as a basic premise for many sociologists when they examine the "functional" and consequences of a particular case.

But Merton does not insist that dysfunctions should receive the greater attention in the functional analysis of a social or cultural form. As any form has both functional aspects (for some) and dysfunctional aspects (for others) he suggests that researchers should take into consideration a "net balance of functional consequences".

Apart from the concept of dysfunctions, Merton makes another contribution to functionalism. Nineteenth century anthropologists held that sometimes a social or cultural form might be non-functional, that is, it might have outlived its functions and at present might have no function at all. They dubbed such non-functional items as "survivals". Merton agrees with this view and says that "there is also the empirical possibility of nonfunctional consequences . . . ". But he cautions that one cannot jump to a conclusion regarding an item that it is not at all functional when it has apparently no function of any kind.

In this context he introduces two concepts, namely, "manifest" and "latent" functions. Manifest functions are those consequences that people observe or expect; latent functions are those consequences that are neither recognized nor intended.

Every item implies some purpose or purposes. When its expected purposes are realized, such consequences are naturally purposed, that is, associated with the intended purposes. Such purposed consequences are called manifest functions.

Sometimes the purposes of an item might not have been realized. However the item may have certain consequences which are unexpected, unintended and unpurposed. Thus in this way the item may be functional. Though it may not have mainfest functions, it turns out to be functional by way of having latent functions. Merton pays particular attention to the latent functions of the things and says that by uncovering the latent functions, one can have increased understanding of society.

To illustrate how an item happens to have latent functions despite the absence of manifest functions, Merton cites Durkheim's analysis of social functions of punishment. According to Durkheim, punishment may fail to have its intended - manifest function (correction of the criminal), yet it has latent function, that is, deterrent effect upon the community.

Merton cites some more examples to drive home his point. One is the Hopi rain ceremonial. The ceremonial is designed to produce rain. Surely, as the meteorologists agree, the ceremonial does not produce rain. The purpose of the ceremony and the consequences do not coincide. But the ceremonial indeed has a different kind of functions – functions which are non-purposed or latent. It reinforces the group identity by providing a periodic occasion on which the scattered members of the group assemble to engage in a common activity. As Durkheim long since indicated, such ceremonials serve as a means by which collective expression is afforded the sentiments which are found to be basic source of group unity.

Thus through the application of the concept of latent function, even an irrational behaviour may be found to be positively functional for the group. Merton concludes that "Operating with the concept of latent function, we are not too quick to conclude that if an activity of a group does not achieve its nominal purpose, then its persistence can be described only as an instance of "inertia", "survival" . . . "

3) Postulate of Indispensability: This assumption which is the last of the trio of postulates holds that as a social or cultural form fulfils some *vital* function by contributing to the maintenance of the system, it becomes indispensable for the system. Malinowski in his manifesto on functionalism claims that "in every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea and belief fulfils some *vital* function, has some task to accomplish, represents an indispensable part within the working whole". Malinowski and other anthropological functionalists hold that the total social system attains its integration and becomes a functional unity because of the contribution, that is, positive function of this elements. So they argue that every social or cultural form is indispensable for the social system.

Kingsley Davis and More also held such a view and regarded religion as an indispensable institution for the society. As the religion functions to make the members of a society adopt "certain ultimate values and ends

in common" and to integrate the society, they regarded it as an indispensable institution.

The postulate of indispensability seems to be a double barrelled one; it seems to contain two related, but distinguishable assertions. First, it suggests that there are certain functions which are indispensable in the sense that unless they are performed, the society (or group or individual) will not persist (such functions are designated *functional pre-requisites or preconditions functionally necessary* for a society). Secondly, the postulate suggests that the social or cultural forms that are fulfilling these functions also are indispensible since what they fulfil are vital.

Merton agrees upon the first assumption and admits the indispensability of certain vital functions for the persistence of the society. But he does not accept the contention that the particular social or cultural forms that fulfil such vital functions are also indispensable just because they fulfil the same. He emphasizes that there is no reason to suppose that particular, given institutions are the only ones able to fulfil the vital functions: therefore a given social structure is in no way sacrosanct and indispensable. On the contrary, there may be a wide range of what he terms "functional alternatives" or "substitutes", able to perform the same task.

Merton sets forth a theorem that "just as the same item may have multiple functions, so may the same function be diversely fulfilled by alternative items". On the basis of this theorem, he declares that there are no functional indispensables. What a structure serves may be fulfilled by an alternative structure. For example, religion maintains and inculcates certain norms and values central to the group and thus combats the anomie that leads to both social disintegration and personal unhappiness. However, this function may be served by structure other than organized religion and by movements that might be interpreted as functional alternatives to religion.

Other functional alternatives can be found among the different types of higher education and vocational training existing in modern industrial societies. For example, for students who fail in an engineering college, the junior college or polytechnic provides a functional alternative. The latter performs the same function or "sorting" students out for the adult world of work as the engineering college does.

Similarly for those individuals for whom marriage and family living seem to be cumbersome and inconvenient, "collectives" serve as functional alternatives. The individuals join the "collectives", rent in singles' apartment complexes and live together as unmarried couples. What marriage can give, that is happiness and gratification, the "collectives " give.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Merton's concepts of functions and dysfunctions, manifest and latent functions, and functional alternatives provide an excellent clarification of the requirements of functionalist theory and show how a general functionalist orientation can be used fruitfully in empirical research.

KEY WORDS

Dysfunction: A consequence that affects the maintenance of the system.

Function: A consequence which makes for the maintenance of the system.

Functional alternatives: Structures that can act as substitutes for such forms which perform vital functions.

Functional prerequistes: The processes or structures which are essential for the maintenance of the system.

Latent functions: Consequences that are not recognized or intended.

Manifest functions: Consequences that are expected or intended.

Survivals: Things existing in society but not having any identifiable function.

ANOMIE

DURKHEIM'S CONCEPT

Durkheim in his classic monograph, *The Suicide* (1897) introduced a concept known as anomie while interpreting the types of suicide. The term *anomie* roughly translates as "normlessness". It refers to the state of breakdown of regulatory norms.

Durkheim states that man has constantly increasing needs and overweening ambitions. But there is nothing in man's organic nature or in his physiological constitution which can regulate his unlimited needs and desires. Since the individual has no internal mechanism of restraining his unlimited propensities, this has to be done by some force exterior and superior to him. As the collective is the only legitimate moral force superior to the individual, it regulates the unlimited needs and desires of the individual.

However occasionally this mechanism breaks down and the collective order goes momentarily incapable of regulating the individuals. When some painful crisis or abrupt transition occurs, the normative structure is instantly upset. The collective order becomes incapable of regulating the desires of the individuals. This state of normlessness or social deregulation is called anomie. In such a state, as the normal life goes out of gear, individuals commit suicide.

Merton's concept

Merton broadens Durkheim's concept anomie in an attempt to explain not only suicide, a form of deviance but various types of deviance. Unlike Durkheim who accounted man's unlimited desires for anomie, Merton seeks "to discover how some social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain persons in the society to engage in none-confirming rather than

confirming conduct". Thus Merton concentrates not on the individual but on the social order in his study of anomie.

From among the several elements of social and cultural structures, Merton analytically separates two: cultural goals and institutionalized means. The goals are more or less integrated and constitute a frame aspirational reference. Success, money, Prestige, etc., are acknowledged as the desirables in every society and regarded as the things worth striving for. Institutionalized means are the approved modes of reaching out for these goals. These are not necessarily the most efficient means but those normatively regulated and approved by the social system.

Though both the goals and means are equally important, Merton says, if goals are given greater emphasis and much less importance is given to the means (norms and procedure) it leads to anomie when crisis or an abrupt transition occurs. But in Merton's conception, in the condition of anomie, norms do not go out of gear. But they lose power in the face of the greater emphasis on goals. The cultural goals and the institutionalized means are the components of social structure. When the two are not integrated, that is, when there is a disjunction - gap - between the two, such condition is anomie. Such condition, Merton says, is dysfunctional.

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However occasionally this mechanism breaks down and the collective order goes momentarily incapable of regulating the individuals. When some painful crisis or abrupt transition like economic disaster, industrial crisis or sudden boom occurs, the normative structure is instantly upset. The

collective order becomes incapable of regulating the desires of the individuals. This state of normlessness or social deregulation is called anomie. In such a state, as the normal life goes out of gear, individuals commit suicide.

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Though both goals and means are equally important, Merton says, if goals are given greater emphasis and much less importance is given to the means (norms and procedure) to be adopted for achieving the goals, such a disjunction between cultural goals and institutionalized means leads to a condition of anomie. In such condition, the norms lose their power.

In both the conceptions of Durkheim and Merton, anomie is related to normlessness. But in Durkheim's conception, normlessness arises when the norms go out of gear when a painful crisis or an abrupt transition occurs. But in Merton's conception, in the condition of anomie, norms do not go out of gear. But they lose power in the face of the greater emphasis on goals. The cultural goals and the institutionalized means are the

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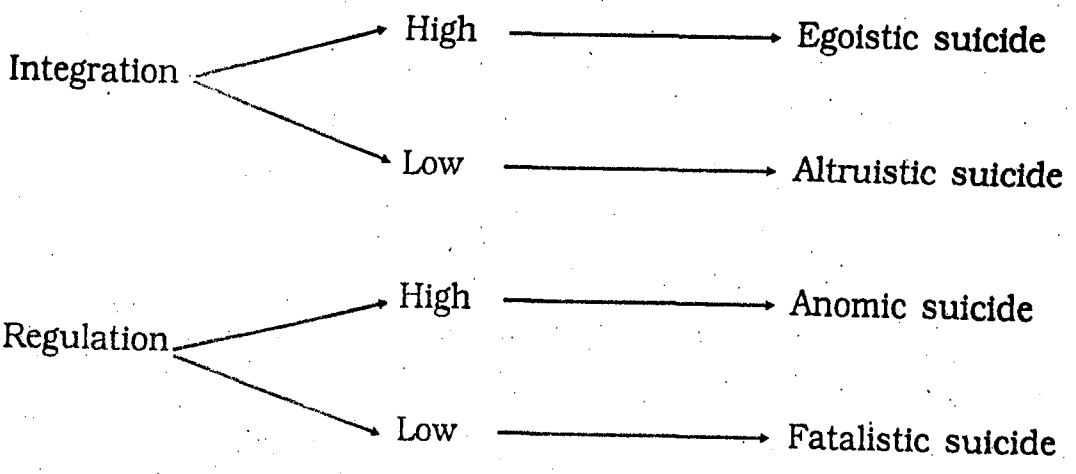


Figure - 8.5.1

As an example, he cites the competitive atheletics and shows how heavy emphasis on goal leads to a condition of anomie in that field. In competitive athletics, emphasis is placed on the success, that is, "winning the game" rather than on "winning the game under the rules". So winning becomes so important that athletes use any means, fair or foul, to achieve this goal. They take drugs, surreptitiously slug the opposition players and use illicit techniques. The norms regulating the ways in which the game should be played are thrown to the winds. Similarly the legitimate means are thrown out and illicit techniques adopted in the examinations when pass is accentuated.

Merton applies his concept of anomie to the United States, where the goal of pecuniary success is heavily emphasized but there is no corresponding emphasis on the "legitimate avenues to march towards this goal". In the American culture money has been consecrated as a value in itself. It places a high premium on the accumulation of money and its ethos is built around such economic success. There are three components in such success-ethos of the American culture. They are:

1. Every one should strive for economic success, since such success is possible for all.
2. If you do not succeed now, do not give up; present failure is a way-station to ultimate success.
3. The only failure is giving up ambition.

Thus the American success-ethos maintains that economic success is possible for all regardless of where they hail from and so everybody should strive towards it without any let up in their efforts. As there is no corresponding emphasis on the mode of earning economic success, people strive to earn the economic success by adopting any means, legitimate or illegitimate. Those who succeed in their striving are adored and respected. What means they employ for rising in the economic position is not looked into. Many looter barons become great industrialists and achieve a higher standing in the society and it is forgotten that they employed dubious means in accumulating wealth. Known criminals are often looked up to and respected, especially in politics.

All these things, according to Merton, are indicative of anomie. As goals alone are highly emphasized in disregard to the means, he says, such things occur in the society. People resort to illegitimate, illicit means to reach anyhow the goals, ignoring the moral principles.

MODES OF INDIVIDUAL ADAPTATION

In the condition of anomie, individuals adapt themselves to it in certain modes. Merton classifies those modes of individual adaptation into five. While one mode of adaptation is conformity, the rest four constitute non-conformity, that is, deviance, Merton explains the typology of the modes of individual adaptation through the following paradigm:

Modes of adaptation	Cultural goals	Institutionalized means
1. Conformity	+	+
2. Innovation	+	

3. Ritualism	–	+
4. Retreatism	–	–
5. Rebellion	$-^{+}$	$-^{+}$

Note: (+) signifies "acceptance", (–) signifies "rejection", ($-^{+}$) signifies rejection of prevailing values and substitution of new values".

Conformity

This is the most commonly and widely diffused mode of adaptation. It implies the acceptance of conventional goals and institutionalized means of seeking them. The individual strives towards success through the approved, legitimate means such as education and hard work. Even if the striving fails, he does not given up hope, but keeps striving.

As the conformity is a positive act, it is functional for the society. It renders stability and continuity to the social system.

Innovation

This type of adaptation occurs when the individual assimilates the cultural emphasis on the goal, without equally internalizing the institutional norms governing the means for its attainment. The individual accepts the success-goal but rejects the approved means; he resorts to institutionally proscribed, but often effective means of attaining the goal. Robbery, theft, embezzlement, forgery, cheating and other similar cases are the examples of illegitimate means adopted for attaining the success-goal. They are innovated and adopted in lieu of approved means.

Merton notes that this type of deviant behaviour occurs under certain circumstances. As long as people have access to legitimate means, there will be little pressure to adopt illegitimate means. People will not prefer to violate the norms or ignore the approved means under such circumstance. But when the people have the least access to the legitimate means and their advance towards success-goal is blocked by numerous structural barriers, they resort to innovation of illegitimate means. In the U.S., the poor, the immigrants and the minorities have the least access to the

legitimate means of success. The immigrants and the minorities are the victims of discrimination. They are born into social circumstances which make it difficult to acquire a good education and to become successful business or professional people. The same is the case with the poor also. So these socially handicapped groups resort to illegitimate means to achieve the success-goal.

In a system like caste system or a rigidly stratified class society, even greater structural barriers to mobility may be found. In such system, the rate of innovation will be greater. Merton declares, "It is only when a system of cultural values extols, virtually above all else, certain *common* success-goals for the *population at large* while the social structure rigorously restricts or completely closes access to approved modes of reaching these goals *for a considerable part of the same population*, that deviant behaviour ensues on a large scale".

According to Merton, poverty alone is not responsible for deviant behaviour. Poverty and the consequent lack of opportunity are not enough to produce a high rate of criminal behaviour. Even the notorious "poverty in the midst of plenty" will not necessarily lead to this result. But when poverty and associated disadvantages in competing for the common cultural goals (such as not having access to the means) are combined with a cultural emphasis on pecuniary success as a dominant goal, high rates of criminal behaviour are the normal outcome. This explains why poverty is more highly correlated with crime in the U.S. than in southern Europe.

Ritualism

This is a minor form of deviance. It involves the abandoning of the cultural goals but preserving institutionalized means. One abandons the cultural goal of success. Yet one continues to abide almost compulsively by institutional norms which become ends in themselves.

The syndrome of the ritualists is both familiar and instructive. Their implicit life-philosophy finds expression in a series of cultural cliches: "I

am satisfied with what I've got", "Don't aim higher and you won't be disappointed".

The ritualists think that high ambitions invite frustration and danger whereas lower aspirations produce satisfaction and security. So, they abandon high goals, but continue the adoption of means. This can be explained by their life experience at an early age. During their childhood, they might have been taught to strictly obey the rules and punished severely disobedience. Thus they might have internalized moral prohibitions against innovation and are more likely to abandon goals than means. This tendency is commonly found among the lower-middle class.

Sometimes, it can be seen that workers work routinely and mechanically. They work without any motivation to increase the output and to receive the reward. They just work according to the rules, as if the rules were the ends in themselves.

Merton says that ritualism is fairly frequent in a society which makes status largely dependent upon one's achievement. In such a society one has to always engage in a competitive struggle for a status. So one is always anxious of the outcome of the struggle and in a state of fear whether the outcome will be positive or negative. To escape from the danger of frustration inherent in the competition, one takes recourse to ritualism by abandoning the goal and clinging all the more to the safe routines and institutionalized means.

Retreatism

Retreatism involves the abandoning of both conventional goals and institutionalized means for attaining them. Those who lose the hope of getting ahead give up both the goals and the means for attaining them. Such people, Merton says, "are, strictly speaking, in the society and not of it. Sociologically these constitute the true aliens". Economic success is no longer meaningful to them and so they do not strive towards it. Consequently they ignore the means as well.

According to Merton, retreatism arises from mental conflict. The individual has internalized the moral obligation for adopting socially approved modes of attaining a goal. But when he fails to near the goal by legitimate measure, because of the internalized moral prohibition, he is unable to use the illegitimate route to reach the goal. The conflict is resolved by abandoning both precipitating elements, the goals and the means. By this he obtains a complete escape from the conflict.

Rebellion

This non-conforming deviance involves the rejection of the legitimacy of both the goals and the means. The rebels do not stop merely with the rejection of the goals and means. At the same time they offer new goals and means to take the place of the existing ones. Political revolutionaries and exponents of counter-culture are some examples of rebels. Most rebels reject the goal of economic success and the institutions of capitalism through which they strive to attain success. In their stead, they offer a wide range of alternative social orders.

CONCLUSION

Having identified the modes of individual adaptation in an anomie situation, Merton extends the concept of anomie as "a breakdown in the cultural structure, occurring particularly when there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accord with them". In other words, anomie sets in when the social structure precludes the behaviour that the cultural system calls for. While there are both goals and means, but if the individuals do not have access to the means, such condition will spell anomie.

KEY WORDS

Anomie: A condition in which there are no adequate institutional means or opportunities for all to realize the cultural goals.

Conformity: Accepting and adopting both the cultural goals and the institutionalized means for realizing them.

Innovation: Inventing and adopting new means in lieu of approved means for realizing the accepted cultural goals.

Rebellion: Rejecting the approved goals and means and offering new goals and means to take the place of existing goals and means.

Retreatism: Abandoning both conventional goals and means for attaining them.

Ritualism: Abandoning the cultural goals, but preserving the institutionalized means.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Science comes into conflict with such institutions as religion and government because of its tendency of
   (A) Universalism
   (B) Communism
   (C) Disinterestedness
   (D) Organized scepticism
2. Merton associates role-set with
   (A) Status
   (B) Status-set
   (C) Status-sequence
   (D) Sequence of status sets
3. In Merton's view, 'anomie' refers to the condition of
   (A) One part of culture lagging behind another part of culture.
   (B) Breakdown of regulating mechanism.
   (C) Disjunction between cultural goal and institutionalized means.
   (D) The parts of a whole working together in harmony.
4. Discuss the importance of ethos of science and explain the principles it lays down for regulating the professional conduct of the scientists.
5. Discuss Merton's views on status and role.

6. Describe the mechanisms which will serve an actor in a role-set to tackle the problem of role conflict.
7. Describe the different types of reference group.
8. Explain the usefulness of Reference Group Theory in sociological analysis.
9. Highlight the contribution made by Merton to functional analysis.
10. Describe the different modes in which the individuals adapt themselves to the condition of anomie.

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