SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY: AN INTRODUCTION

III SEMESTER

B.A. SOCIOLOGY

CORE COURSE (SGY3 B03)

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
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SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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MODULE I

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Introduction

This module discus the foundations of social thought in the context of Europe. As we know modern social thought emerged in the 18th and 19th century. Historical and geographical context played an important role in the development of classical social thought. In this module a discussion on different social, political, intellectual and cultural context of the development of classical social thought and modern sociology is carried out.

As we know, all sociological theories are deeply influenced by their social and historical contexts. In another words, sociology in general and sociological theories in particular are not only influenced from that contexts but consider these social setting as its basic subject matter. Before going in to the details of different theories I focus briefly on a few of the most

important social conditions that were of the utmost significance in the development of sociology in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The first part of this unit deals with the emergence of sociological theories in the nineteenth century in Europe. The social and intellectual conditions of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe triggered the development of sociology and sociological theory during this period. As we know the proper understanding of the socio-political and intellectual development during this period will help us to appreciate the contribution of the founding thinkers of sociology and social theory.

In this paper we examine the contemporary relevance of classical sociological theory. The theorists that we discuss in this paper are vital in two ways: first, because they helped to chart out the course of the discipline of sociology from its beginning and to the present time. Second, their concepts and theories still permeate contemporary concerns. Sociologists still seek to explain such critical issues as the nature of capitalism, the basis of social solidarity or cohesion, the role of authority in social life, the benefits and dangers posed by modern bureaucracies, the dynamics of gender and racial oppression, and the nature of the "self," to name but a few. Classical sociological theory provides a strong conceptual base for understanding today's complex world.

This module also discusses the historical origin of sociological theory. The aim of this chapter is to describe the different historical events that helped to shape sociological theories. It is very difficult to establish the precise date in when sociological theory began. People have been thinking about, and developing theories of, social life since early in history.

A proper understanding of this historical context will help us to appreciate the ideas of the early sociologists and their contributions to the emergence of sociology as a discipline.

So, to understand the emergence of sociology in Europe we need to appreciate the relationship between social condition and the emergence of social ideas. There is always a connection between the social conditions of a period and the ideas, which arise and are dominant in that period.

1.1 Emergence of Social thought

This module traces the emergence of sociology and sociological theory by analyzing the intellectual conditions of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. As we know, modern sociology emerged first in Europe. Modern sociology emerged as a response to the social and intellectual climate prevailing in Europe in eighteenth and nineteenth century. Auguste Comte, French thinker has been called as the "father of sociology," but around 500 years back Ibn Khaldun, an intellectual from Arab world developed scientific approach to understand social and historical phenomenon.

In his analysis of the evolution and development of civilizations, Ibn Khaldun argued that the advanced societies that have been developed in densely settled communities are accompanied by a more centralized political authority system and by the gradual erosion of social cohesion within the population. Khaldun's goal was to explain the historical process of the rise and fall of civilizations in terms of a pattern of recurring conflicts between tough nomadic desert tribes and sedentary-type societies with their love of luxuries and pleasure. As a result such societies become vulnerable to conquest by tough and highly disciplined nomadic peoples from the unsettled desert. Eventually, however,

the hardy conquerors succumb to the temptations of the soft and refined lifestyle of the people they had conquered, and so the cycle is eventually repeated. Although this cyclical theory was based on Khaldun's observations of social trends in the Arabian desert, his goal was to develop a general model of the dynamics of society and the process of large-scale social change. His insights were neglected by European and American social theorists, however, perhaps partly because of the growing dominance of Western Europe over the Arab world in succeeding centuries.

1.2. Contributions of Rousseau- The Social Contract

France, like some other European countries during the eighteenth century, had entered the age of reason and rationalism. Some of the major philosophers, whose ideas influenced the French people, were rationalists who believed that all true things could be proved by reason. Some of these thinkers were Montesquieu (1689-1755), Locke (1632-1704), Voltaire (1694-1778), and Rousseau (1712-1778).

The major ideas of these and several other intellectuals struck the imagination of the French people. Also some of them who had served in the French army, which was sent to assist the Americans in their War of Independence from British imperialism, came back with the ideas of equality of individuals and their right to choose their own government. The French middle class was deeply affected by these ideas of liberty and equality. So far you have leant about the basic picture of the French society just before the Revolution.

Rousseau (1712-1778) is the most famous of the three writers and had tremendous influence on the ideas leading to the French Revolutions (1789). He is associated with the remark

'Man was born free, but everywhere he is in chains from the state of nature, human beings moved to develop a general will which could provide the rationale for exercise of power and even kings and tyrants could not ignore the power of the general will, hence the rationale for abolition of kingdoms and bringing in Republics. Rousseau wrote in his book, *The Social Contract*, that the people of a country have the right to choose their sovereign. He believed that people can develop their personalities best only under a government which is of their own choice.

In his, *Social Contract***,** Rousseau reveals himself as obsessed with the demands of life in society, by the relationships of dependence and subordination which it creates among men. He was concerned about the rivalries and enemities which such dependence generates. Society which brings people together in fact sets them apart and makes them enemies of each other. It is in these senses that he wrote the famous words by which he is well known till this day that "man is born free, but found in chains everywhere".

1.3. Montesquieu: Classification of Societies

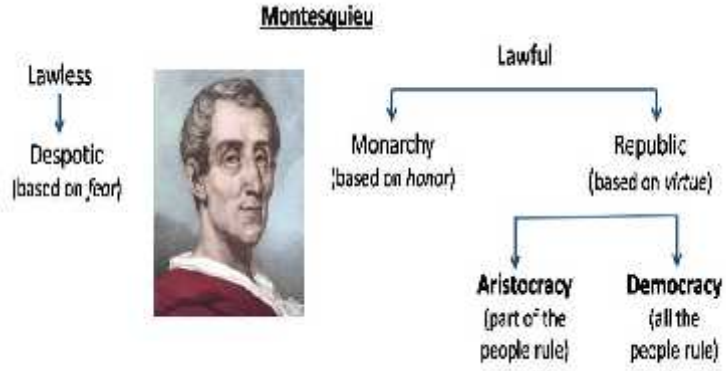
Montesquieu was one of the great political philosophers of the Enlightenment. He was born in France in 1689. Montesquieu's early life occurred at a time of significant governmental change. England had declared itself a constitutional monarchy in the wake of its Glorious Revolution (1688-89), and had joined with Scotland in the Union of 1707 to form the Kingdom of Great Britain. In France, the long-reigning Louis XIV died in 1715, and was succeeded by five year-old Louis XV. He became a counselor of the Bordeaux Parliament in 1714. A year later, he married Jeanne de Lartigue, a Protestant, who bore him three children.

These national transformations had a great impact on Montesquieu, who would refer to them repeatedly in his work. Montesquieu withdrew from the practice of law to devote himself to study and writing. Besides writing works on society and politics, Montesquieu traveled for a number of years through Europe, including Austria and Hungary, spending a year in Italy and 18 months in England, where he became a freemason before resettling in France. He was troubled by poor eyesight and was completely blind by the time he died from a high fever in 1755.

He constructed a naturalistic account of the various forms of government and their advances or constrains. He used this account to explain how governments might be preserved from corruption. He saw despotism, in particular, as a standing danger for any government not already despotic, and argued that it could best be prevented by a system in which different bodies exercised legislative, executive, and judicial power, and in which all those bodies were bound by the rule of law.

The Spirit of the Laws is a treatise on political theory first published anonymously by Montesquieu in 1748. The book was originally published anonymously partly because Montesquieu's works were subject to censorship, but its influence outside France grew with rapid translation into other languages. He spent around 21 years researching and writing *The Spirit of the Laws*, covering many things, including the law, social life, and the study of anthropology, and providing more than 3,000 commendations. In this political treatise, Montesquieu pleaded in favor of a constitutional system of government and the separation of powers, the ending of slavery, the preservation of civil liberties and the law, and the idea that political institutions should reflect the social and geographical aspects of each community.

In *The Spirit of the Laws,* Montesquieu defines three main political systems: republican, monarchical, and despotic. As he defines them, republican political systems vary depending on how broadly they extend citizenship rights—those that extend citizenship relatively broadly are termed democratic republics, while those that restrict citizenship more narrowly are termed aristocratic republics. The distinction between monarchy and despotism hinges on whether or not a fixed set of laws exists that can restrain the authority of the ruler. If so, the regime counts as a monarchy. If not, it counts as despotism. In brief, in Monarchy a single person governs by fixed and established laws while in Despotic government, a single person directs everything but his own will.



1.3.1. Separation of Powers:

Montesquieu argues that the executive, legislative, and judicial functions of government (the so-called tripartite system) should be assigned to different bodies, so that attempts by one branch of government to infringe on political liberty might

be restrained by the other branches (checks and balances).Montesquieu described the various forms of distribution of political power among a legislature, an executive, and a judiciary. Montesquieu's approach was to present and defend a form of government whose powers were not excessively centralized in a single monarch or similar ruler (a form known then as "aristocracy").

According to him, separation of powers requires a different source of legitimization, or a different act of legitimization from the same source, for each of the separate powers. If the legislative branch appoints the executive and judicial powers, as Montesquieu indicated, there will be no separation or division of its powers, since the power to appoint carries with it the power to revoke. He argues that the best way to protect liberty was to divide the powers into three branches; executive, Legislative and Judiciary.

Montesquieu actually specified that the independence of the judiciary has to be real, and not merely apparent. The judiciary was generally seen as the most important of the three powers, independent and unchecked. Through this Montesquieu produced his own analysis and assigned to each form of government an animating principle: the republic, based on virtue; the monarchy, based on honour; and despotism, based on fear. His definitions show that this classification rests not on the location of political power but on the government’s manner of conducting policy; it involves a historical and not a narrow descriptive approach.

To sum up, Montesquieu made a significant impact on the intellectual history of the 18th century and played important role in the development of social and political thought. The first of these is his classification of governments, a subject that was derigueur for a political theorist. Abandoning the classical

divisions of his predecessors into monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. The second of his most noted arguments, the theory of the separation of powers, is treated differently. Dividing political authority into the legislative, executive, and judicial powers, he asserted that, in the state that most effectively promotes liberty, these three powers must be confided to different individuals or bodies, acting independently. And finally, in his most celebrated doctrines he tried to the political influence of climate. Basing himself on doctrines met in his reading, on the experience of his travels, and on experiments—admittedly somewhat naive—conducted at Bordeaux, he stressed the effect of climate, primarily thinking of heat and cold, on the physical frame of the individual, and, as a consequence, on the intellectual outlook of society.

1.4. Saint Simone: Positive Philosophy

Comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), French social philosopher and reformer, is a controversial figure in modern social thought, who—without writing a single enduring work—had a crucial role in the early nineteenth-century developments of industrial socialism, positivism, sociology, political economics, and the philosophy of history. He believed that the problems of his society could be best solved by reorganizing economic production. This will deprive the class of property owners from their means of production and thus they will lose their economic freedom which was an important value of his time.

When we discuss French Revolution, obviously we will come to analyse how the feudal French society was divided into three estates, the first being the clergy, second the nobility and the third, the commoners. The first two estates between themselves owned the major portion of the landed property as well as wealth

and status. It is this social and economic structure that Saint-Simon wanted to reorganise.

Saint-Simon's main significance for the social sciences is threefold. He was one of the first to grasp the revolutionary implications of "industrialization" (a word he himself coined) for traditional institutions and morality and to conceptualize the industrial system as a distinctive type. He was also among the earliest to advocate a naturalistic science of society as a rational guide to social reconstruction. But he is most important as provisional formulator of an "evolutionary organicist" theory, whose influence is reflected in social evolutionary doctrines as diverse as those of Herbert Spencer, Lester Ward, and Karl Marx.

He directly inaugurated the "positivist organicist" school—most notably represented by Comte and Emile Durkheim—which for a century thereafter was to vie with utilitarianism, Marxism, and Hegelian historicism for theoretical predominance in the social sciences (Martindale 1960, part 2). Through Durkheim, his organicist concept of social order carries over into contemporary "functionalism" in anthropology and sociology.

In a joint publication *Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for the Reorganising of Society*, (1822) Saint-Simon and Comte wrote about the law of three stages through which each branch of knowledge must pass. They said that the object of social physics, the positive science of society later renamed as 'sociology', is to discover the natural and immutable laws of progress. These laws are as important to the science of society as the laws of gravity, discovered by Newton, are to the natural sciences. The intellectual alliance between Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte did not last long and in fact ended in a bitter quarrel.

The most interesting aspect of Saint-Simon was his significance to the development of *both* conservative (like Comte's) and radical Marxian theory. On the conservative side, Saint-Simon wanted to preserve society as it was, but he did not seek a return to life as it had been in the Middle Ages, as did Bonald and Maistre. In addition, he was a *positivist* (Durkheim, 1928/1962:142), which meant that he believed that the study of social phenomena should employ the same scientific techniques that were used in the natural sciences.

On the radical side, Saint-Simon saw the need for socialist reforms, especially the centralized planning of the economic system. But Saint-Simon did not go nearly as far as Marx did later. Although he, like Marx, saw the capitalists superseding the feudal nobility, he felt it inconceivable that the working class would come to replace the capitalists. Many of Saint-Simon's ideas are found in Comte's work, but Comte developed them in a more systematic fashion. These three classical enlightenment scholars developed systematic philosophical and social accounts on different issues related with state, law, politics and religions.

1.2 Auguste Comte : Positivism, Hierarchy of Sciences, Law of Three stages

2.2.1. Auguste Comte: Positivism

Before going to Auguste Comte's theoretical contributions to Sociology we will have a shot biographical sketch. It will help us to locate him in a socio-political context in which he born and brought up. He had born in Montpelier, France, on January 19, 1798. His parents were middle class, and his father eventually rose to the position of official local agent for the tax collector. Although a precocious student, Comte never received a college-level degree. He and his whole class were dismissed from the

Ecole Polytechnique for their rebelliousness and their political ideas.

This expulsion had an adverse effect on Comte's academic career. In 1817 he became secretary to Claude Henri Saint-Simon, a philosopher forty years Comte's senior. They worked closely together for several years. Saint-Simon helped Comte to develop an orientation towards philosophical thinking. Thus, with Saint-Simon, he developed several major ideas. However, their partnership was short lived and they ended up quarreling with each other. Later Auguste Comte published some of his lecture notes in, *Cours de Philosophie Positive.*

Comte is known as father of sociology and he was the first to use the term *sociology*. He had an enormous influence on later sociological theorists (especially Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim). And he believed that the study of sociology should be scientific, just as many classical theorists did and most contemporary sociologists do. Comte was greatly disturbed by the anarchy that pervaded French society and was critical of those thinkers who had spawned both the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

He developed his scientific view, "positivism," or "positive philosophy," to combat what he considered to be the negative and destructive philosophy of the Enlightenment. Comte was in line with, and influenced by, the French counterrevolutionary Catholics (especially Bonald and Maistre). However, his work can be set apart from theirs on at least two grounds. First, he did not think it possible to returnto the Middle Ages; advances in science and industry made that impossible. Second, he developed a much more sophisticated theoretical system than his predecessors, one that was adequate to shape a good portion of early sociology.

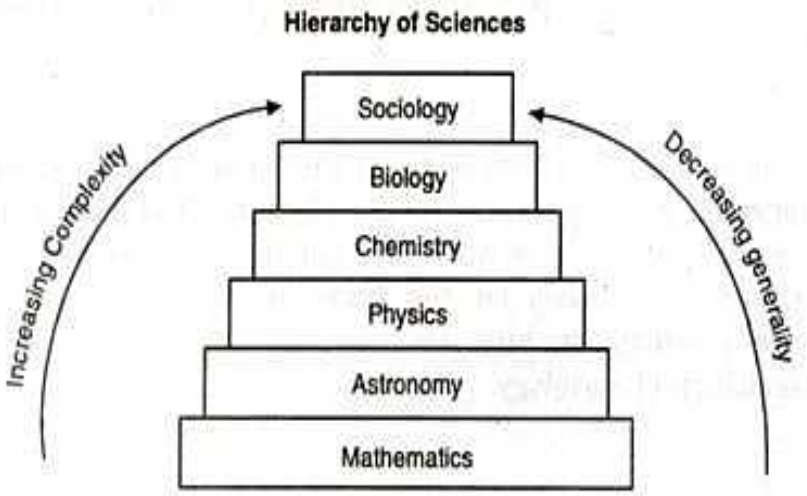
Comte developed *social physics*, or what in 1839 he called *sociology*. The use of the term *social physics* made it clear that Comte sought to model sociology after the "hard sciences." This new science, which in his view would ultimately become *the* dominant science, was to be concerned with both social statics (existing social structures) and social dynamics (social change). Although both involved the search for laws of social life, he felt that social dynamics was more important than social statics. This focus on change reflected his interest in social reform, particularly reform of the ills created by the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. Comte did not urge revolutionary change, because he felt the natural evolution of society would make things better. Reforms were needed only to assist the process a bit.

Comte's major work *The Positive Philosophy* included his arguments for a science of society detailing its areas of focus, methodological approach, and applied use. In early remarks he called that science social physics, but then switched to sociology, a term he had previously used in private correspondence. He modified and expanded on his conception of sociology in numerous later writings, the most important of which is the System of Positive Polity.

2.2.2. Hierarchy of Sciences

One of the important pillars of positive philosophy, the law of the classification of the sciences, has withstood the test of time much better than the law of the three stages. Of the various classifications that have been proposed, it is Comte's that is still the most popular today. This classification, too, structures the *Course*, which examines each of the six fundamental sciences—mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, sociology—in turn. It provides a way to do justice to the diversity of the sciences without thereby losing sight of their unity. This

classification also makes Comte the founder of the philosophy of science in the modern sense.



For Comte sociology is to be based on empirical observation in order to discover determinate social laws and how these laws can be used to improve social harmony. For Comte, the discovery of such laws constitutes pure sociology; discovery of how to use those laws in order to engineer a better society constitutes applied sociology. Sociology is conceived by Comte as part of a larger system of knowledge – the positive philosophy. This system assumes a series of increasingly complex levels of reality. Each level of reality is governed by a distinct set of determinant laws that cannot be reduced to (i.e., logically deduced from) those of another level. Each level thus requires a separate science to discover its particular laws. These sciences themselves are presented as social evolutionary developments that emerge from pre scientific explanation.

Comte used positivism in two ways. In the first version of Comte's positivism, these laws can be derived from doing research on the social world and/or from theorizing about that world. Research is needed to uncover these laws, but in Comte's view the facts derived from research are of secondary importance to sound speculation. Thus, Comte's positivism involves empirical research, but that research is subordinated to theory. There are two basic ways of getting at the real world that exists out there—doing research and theorizing.

Although Comte recognized the importance of research, he emphasized the need for theory and speculation. In emphasizing theory and speculation, Comte was at variance with what has now come to be thought of as positivism, especially pure empiricism through sensory observations and the belief in quantification. He defined *sociology* as a positivistic science. In fact, in defining *sociology*, Comte related it to one of the most positivistic sciences, physics: "Sociology … is the term I may be allowed to invent to designate social physics".

In the second vision, he used it as the opposite of the negativism that, in his view, dominated the social world of his day. More specifically, that negativity was the moral and political disorder and chaos that occurred in France, and throughout Western Europe, in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789. Among the symptoms of this malaise were intellectual anarchy, political corruption, and incompetence of political leaders. Comte's positive philosophy was designed to counter the negative philosophy and its symptoms that he found all around him.

2.2.3. The Law of the Three Stages

In his early works Auguste Comte tried to discover the successive stages through which human race had evolved. In his study he began from the state of human race, not much superior to the great apes, to the state at which he found the civilised society of Europe. In this study he applied scientific methods of comparison and arrived at The Law of Human Progress or The Law of three Stages.

According to him, knowledge originates as theological, becomes metaphysical, and culminates as positive (or scientific). Theological explanations ascribe events to actions of supernatural agencies. Metaphysical explanation assumes that outcomes reflect underlying essences. And positive explanation, according to Comte, relies solely on the objective observation of relationships. The three stages of the evolution of human thought are

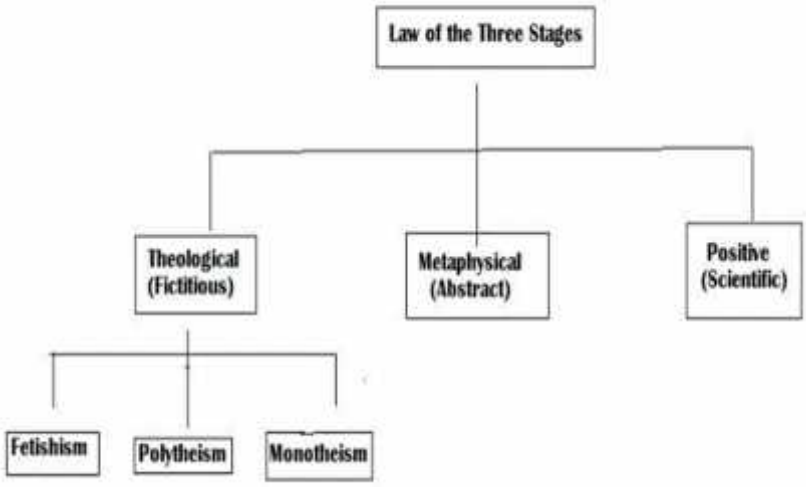
1. **Theological Stage:** In the theological stage, the mind explains phenomena by ascribing them to beings or forces comparable to human beings. In this stage, human being attempts to discover the first and the final causes (the origin and purpose) of all effects. Thus, human mind at this level supposes that all phenomena are produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings. For example, some tribes believed that diseases like small pox, cholera were the expressions of God's anger.

2. **Metaphysical Stage:** In the metaphysical stage, the mind explains phenomenon by invoking abstract entities like 'nature'. These abstract entities are personified abstractions. Human beings pursue meaning and explanation of the world

in term of ‘essences’, ‘ideals’, ‘forms’, i.e. in short, in a conception of some ultimate reality, such as God.

3. **Positive Stage:** In the positive stage human beings cease to look for ‘original sources’ or final causes because these can be neither checked against facts norutilised to serve our needs. Human mind at this stage applies itself to the study of their laws, i.e. their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Human beings seek to establish laws which link facts and which govern social life (Coser 1971).

In this ‘The Law of Three Stages’ of knowledge we can see three types of knowledge such as, first, theological or fictitious knowledge, second, metaphysical or abstract knowledge and, third, scientific or positive knowledge (Comte, 1998: 71). Knowledge begins by trying to explain things on the basis of supernatural phenomena (theology). This is then challenged by the negative critique of philosophy (metaphysics). Finally, the entire process culminates in positive science.



Intellectual stages correspond to three stages of social organization from a warrior-military society (theological), a professional-commercial society (metaphysical), to a human-industrial society (science). This 'Law' is seen as an inevitable series of evolutionary stages that every (Western) society is fated to pass through as it progresses from the childhood of the family unit to the adolescence of the state before reaching maturity by covering the whole of humanity. The bellow table illustrates Comte's three stages of theoretical knowledge.

	Form of knowledge	Social basis	Organization	Social type
1	Theological	The family	Military	Warrior
2	Metaphysical	The state	Commercial	Lawyer
3	Positive science	Society/ Races/ Humanity	Industrial	Scientist

Comte emphasized on the development of positivist methodology to understand social phenomenon. According to him, the resources upon which sociology can explain the laws of progress and of social order through three methods. They are, first of all, the same that have been used so successfully in the natural sciences: observation, experimentation, and comparison. Observation does not mean the unguided quest for miscellaneous facts. "But for the guidance of a preparatory theory," the observer would not know what facts to look at". "No social fact can have any scientific meaning till it is connected with some other social fact" by a preliminary theory. Hence, observation can come into its own only when it is subordinated to the statical and dynamic

laws of phenomena but within these limits it remains indispensable.

The second scientific method of investigation, experimentation, is only partly applicable in the social sciences. Direct experimentation is not feasible in the human world. But "experimentation takes place whenever the regular course of the phenomenon is interfered with in any determinate manner. . . . Pathological cases are the true scientific equivalent of pure experimentation." Disturbances in the social body are "analogous to diseases in the individual organism, and so the study of the pathological gives, as it were, privileged access to an understanding of the normal (Coser 1971).

The scientific method of inquiry of central importance to the sociologistis comparison, above all, because it "performs the great service of casting outthe . . . spirit [of absolutism]." Comparisons of human with animal societies will give us precious clues to "the first germs of the social relations" and to the borderlines between the human and the animal. Yet comparisons within the human species are even more central to sociology. The chief method here "consists in a comparison of the different co-existing states of human society on the various parts of the earth's surface—these states being completely independent of each other.

Although all three conventional methods of science must be used in sociology, it relies above all on a fourth one, the historical method. "The historical comparison of the consecutive states of humanity is not only the chief scientific device of the new political philosophy ... it constitutes the substratum of the science, in whatever is essential to it." Historical comparisons throughout the time in which humanity has evolved are at the very

core of sociological inquiry. Sociology is nothing if it is not informed by a sense of historical evolution (Coser 1971).

According to Comte 'the universe is empirical (without spiritual force), operates according to law-like principles, and that humans can discover those laws and use them to understand, control, and predict the forces that influence their lives. On the one hand fatalism puts a spiritual force at the center of existence; positivism puts humanity at the center of existence. Thus, it is positive in a humanistic sense. Positivism, then, is a philosophy that confines itself to sense data, denies any spiritual forces or metaphysical considerations, and emphasizes the ability of the human being to affect their own fate generally through science.

According to Comte, society is broken into two distinct spheres in his 'positivist' theory of society, on the one hand, 'social statics' (order) and, on the other, 'social dynamics' (progress):

1. Social statics: a concept of social order, stability, and integration.

2. Social dynamics: a concept of social change, fragmentation and progress.

Social statics studies society at rest in a fixed space. Social dynamics studies the laws of motion as things change over time. This follows a similar division in biology between fixed anatomy and changes in physiology. Statics, or 'social anatomy', and dynamics, or 'social physiology', may be divided for purposes of scientific analysis but in practice they are always inseparable. Social statics are those 'laws of harmony of human society', involving the core institutions of the family, the state and, ultimately, humanity (or at least the 'white race' as Comte, 1998: 263, put it). Statics refer to the essential capacities of all types of

societies – forms of social organization, intellectual culture, material production and moral norms. Statics are therefore more basic than dynamics. Social dynamics refers to the necessary progress of society from more simple to more complex forms of social organization through the successive stages of conquest, trade and production. There can be no laws of social development without movement.

2.2.4. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

Herbert Spencer was born in Derby, England, on April 27, 1820. He was not schooled in the arts and humanities, but rather in technical and utilitarian matters. Spencer never went to a conventional school but was taught at home by his father and uncle. He went to some small private schools but only for short periods, according to his autobiography, his training in mathematics was the best. In spite of not receiving a systematic training in other subjects like natural sciences, literature, history, he wrote outstanding treatises on biology and psychology.

At a young age Spencer started working as an Engineer in the railroad engineering field.

In 1837 he began work as a civil engineer for a railway, an occupation he held until 1846. During this period, Spencer continued to study on his own and began to publish scientific and political works. In 1848 Spencer was appointed an editor of *The Economist*, and his intellectual ideas began to solidify. By 1850, he had completed his first major work, *Social Statics*. During the writing of this work, Spencer first began to experience insomnia, and over the years his mental and physical problems mounted. He was to suffer a series of nervous breakdowns throughout the rest of his life.

In 1853 Spencer received an inheritance that allowed him to quit his job and live for the rest of his life as a gentleman scholar. He never earned a university degree or held an academic position. As he grew more isolated, and physical and mental illness mounted, Spencer's productivity as a scholar increased. Eventually, Spencer began to achieve not only fame within England but also an international reputation. As Richard Hofstadter put it: "In the three decades after the Civil War it was impossible to be active in any field of intellectual work without mastering Spencer" (1959:33).

2.2.5. Organic analogy and Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer contributed several key ideas to the field of sociology. As a contemporary of Auguste Comte, he too was trying to establish sociology as the science of society. Spencer had come into contact with Comte's ideas but he did not accept them. Instead, he brought about a shift in the study of society. His sociology is based on the evolutionary doctrine and the organic analogy.

The *Social Statics* (1850), *The Study of Sociology* (1873), and *Principles of Sociology* (1876-96) are three major works of Herbert Spencer. He was influenced by the idea of Darwin and his evolutionary theory. Spencer believed that throughout all times there actually has been social evolution from a simple, uniform or homogeneous structure to a complex, multiform or heterogeneous one. Spencer has been influenced deeply by Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species* (1859). It had brought a revolutionary change in the understanding of how life evolved on earth from a simple unicellular organism to multicellular complex organisms like, human beings themselves.

Although Spencer wrote several books on sociology, he did not give a formal definition of the discipline. According to him, the social process is unique and so sociology as a science must explain the present state of society by explaining the initial stages of evolution and applying to them the laws of evolution. Thus, the evolutionary doctrine is central to his thesis. After explaining this doctrine, we will explain the meaning and significance of organic analogy. You will also learn about Spencer's classification of societies with respect to their place in social evolution.

Spencer had to find a way of reconciling his thoroughgoing individualism with his organicist approach. In this he differed sharply from Comte, who was basically anti-individualistic in his general philosophy and developed an organicist theory in which the individual was conceived as firmly subordinated to society. Spencer, in contrast, not only conceived of the origins of society in individualistic and utilitarian terms, but saw society as a vehicle for the enhancement of the purposes of individuals.

According to Spencer, men had originally banded together because it was advantageous for them to do so. "Living together arose because, on the average, it proved more advantageous to each than living apart." And once society had come into being, it was perpetuated because, "maintenance of combination [of individuals] is maintenance of conditions . . . more satisfactory [to] living than the combined persons would otherwise have." In line with his individualistic perspective, he saw the quality of a society as depending to a large extent on the quality of the individuals who formed it.

"There is no way of coming at a true theory of society, but by inquiry into the nature of its component individuals. , . . Every

phenomenon exhibited by an aggregation of men originates in some quality of man himself." Spencer held as a general principle that "the properties of the units determine the properties of the aggregate," In spite of these individualistic underpinnings of his philosophy, Spencer developed an overall system in which the organicist analogy is pursued with even more rigor than in Comte's work. The ingenious way Spencer attempted to overcome the basic incompatibility between individualism and organicism is best described in his own words. After having shown the similarity between social and biological organisms, he turned to show how they were unlike each other. A biological organism is encased in a skin, but a society is bound together by the medium of language.

Spencer believed that all inorganic, organic, and superorganic (societal) phenomena undergo evolution and devolution, or dissolution. That is, phenomena undergo a process of evolution whereby matter becomes integrated and motion tends to dissipate. Phenomena also undergo a process of devolution in which motion increases and matter moves toward disintegration. Having deduced these general principles of evolution and dissolution from his overarching principles, Spencer then turned to specific areas in order to show that his theory of evolution (and devolution) holds inductively, that is, that “all orders *do* exhibit a progressive integration of Matter and concomitant loss of Motion” (1902/1958:308).

The combination of induction and deduction led Spencer to his “final” evolutionary formula: Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent, heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation. (Spencer, 1902/1958:394) Let us decompose this general perspective and

examine each of the major elements of Spencer's evolutionary theory.

First, evolution involves progressive change from a less coherent to a more coherent form; in other words, it involves increasing *integration.* Second, accompanying increasing integration is the movement from homogeneity to more and more heterogeneity; in other words, evolution involves increasing *differentiation.* Third, there is a movement from confusion to order, from indeterminacy to determined order, "an increase in the distinctness with which these parts are marked off from one another" (Spencer, 1902/1958:361)

In other words, evolution involves movement from the *indefinite to the definite.* Thus, the three key elements of evolution are increasing integration, heterogeneity, and definiteness. More specifically, Spencer was concerned with these elements and his general theory of evolution as they apply to both *structures* and *functions.* At the most general level, Spencer associated structures with "matter" and saw them growing more integrated, heterogeneous, and definite. Functions are linked to "retained motion," and they, too, are seen as growing increasingly integrated, heterogeneous, and definite. We will have occasion to deal with Spencer's more concrete thoughts on the evolution of functions and structures in his work on society.

One of the important contributions of Herbert Spencer was developing an analogy between the social system and biological organisms. On the basis of this developed a complex threefold scheme for categorizing social systems based on whether they displayed complex or simple structures and whether they were essentially stable or unstable. Firstly, a ''simple'' system is undifferentiated by sections, groups, or tribal formations. Secondly, a ''compound'' system amounts to an

amalgamation of communities with a rudimentary hierarchy and division of labor. Thirdly, ‘‘doubly compound’’ systems are more complex still and united under one organized authority (Spencer 1971).

It was Herbert Spencer who used the organismic analogy to create an explicit form of functional analysis. Drawing upon materials from his monumental *The Principles of Biology* (1864–1867), Spencer’s *The Principles of Sociology* (1874–1896) is filled with analogies between organisms and society as well as between ecological processes (variation, competition, and selection) and societal evolution (which he saw as driven by war). Spencer did not see society as an actual organism; rather, he conceptualized ‘‘superorganic systems’’ (organization of organisms) as revealing certain similarities in their ‘‘principles of arrangement’’ to biological organisms (1874–1896, pp. 451–462).

In so doing, he introduced the notion of ‘‘functional requisites’’ or ‘‘needs,’’ thereby creating functionalism. For Spencer, there were three basic requisites of superorganic systems: (1) the need to secure and circulate resources, (2) the need to produce usable substances, and (3) the need to regulate, control, and administer system activities (1874–1896, p. 477). Thus, any pattern of social organization reveals these three classes of functional requisites, and the goal of sociological analysis is to see how these needs are met in empirical social systems.

To conclude, Herbert Spencer’s theory is more powerful, and his work has more contemporary significance, than that of the other significant figure in the “prehistory” of sociological theory, Auguste Comte. Their theories have some similarities (e.g., positivism) but far more differences (e.g., Comte’s faith in a

positivist religion and Spencer's opposition to any centralized system of control). Spencer offered a series of general principles from which he deduced an evolutionary theory: increasing integration, heterogeneity, and definiteness of both structures and functions. Indeed, sociology, in Spencer's work, is the study of the evolution of societies. Although Spencer sought to legitimize sociology as a science, he also felt that sociology is linked to, and should draw upon, other sciences such as biology (especially the idea of survival of the fittest) and psychology (especially the importance of sentiments). In part from his concern with psychology, Spencer developed his methodological-individualist approach to the study of society.

Spencer addressed a number of the methodological difficulties confronting sociology as a science. He was especially concerned with various biases the sociologist must overcome—educational, patriotic, class, political, and theological. In seeking to exclude these biases, Spencer articulated a "value-free" position for sociology. In much of his substantive work, Spencer employed the comparative-historical method. The evolution of society occupies a central place in Spencer's sociology.

In his analysis of societal evolution, Spencer employed the three general aspects of evolution mentioned previously—increasing integration (increasing size and coalescence of masses of people), heterogeneity, and definiteness (here, clearly demarcated institutions)—as well as a fourth aspect—the increasing coherence of social groups. In his evolutionary social theory

2.2.6. The Evolution of Societies or Type of Society

Spencer sought to build two classificatory systems of society related to his thesis of social evolution. The first thesis states that

in the process of social evolution societies move from simple to various levels of compound on the basis of their degree of composition. Spencer traced, among other things, the movement from simple to compounded societies and from militant to industrial societies

According to Spencer the aggregate of some simple societies gives rise to compound societies, the aggregate of some compound societies gives rise to doubly compound societies. The aggregate of some doubly compound societies gives rise to trebly compound societies According to Spencer simple societies consist of families, a compound societies consist of families unified into clans, doubly compound societies consist of clans unified into tribes and the trebly compound societies, such as our own, have tribes brought together forming nations or states The second classificatory system is based on construction of types which may not exist in actual reality but which would help in analysing and comparing different societies. Here a different type of evolution is conceived of, from (i) military to, (ii) industrial societies.

1. **The Militant Society**

The Militant society is a type in which predominant organisation is offensive and defensive military action. Such society has the following characteristics.

- ✓ Human relationships in such societies are marked by compulsory cooperation**.**
- ✓ There exists a highly centralised pattern of authority and social control.
- ✓ A set of myths and beliefs reaffirm the hierarchical nature of society.

- ✓ Life is marked by rigorous discipline and a close identity between public and private life.

2. **The Industrial Society**

The Industrial society is one in which military activity and organisation is peripheral to society. The greater part of society concentrates on human production and welfare. The characteristics of such a society are that these societies are marked by

- ✓ voluntary cooperation**,**
- ✓ firm recognition of people's personal rights,
- ✓ separation of the economic realm from political control of the government and
- ✓ growth of free associations and institutions.

Herbert Spencer was aware that societies need not fit into either of the systems totally. They served the purpose of models to aid classification. These are some of the central ideas of Herbert Spencer.

Spencer also articulated a series of ethical and political ideals. Consistent with his methodological individualism, Spencer argued that people must be free to exercise their abilities; they must have liberty. The only role for the state is the protection of individual liberty. Such a laissez-faire political perspective fits well with Spencer's ideas on evolution and survival of the fittest. Given his perspective on the gradual evolution of society, Spencer also rejected the idea of any radical solution (e.g., communism) to society's problems.

1.3. Conclusion

In the first part of this module we studied how social conditions contributed for the development of social thought. We have also learnt how different changes taking place in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Europe bothered social thinkers. Sociology thus grew essentially as a product of the reflections of the great thinkers reflecting on society. We discussed sociologically significant themes of the French and the Industrial Revolutions.

In the second part of this module we discussed the ideas of the early thinkers and founding fathers of sociology and contributions of these ideas to development of sociology. It also discussed social and political context in which Auguste Comte (1798-1857) formed his theoretical and intellectual basis. As the founding father of sociology we also discussed the central ideas of Comte, such as the law of the three stages (the theological state, the metaphysical stage, and the positive stage), the hierarchy of the sciences, the static and dynamic sociology.

Herbert Spencer and his contributions towards the discipline sociology was also mentioned in this module. He is considered to be the second founding father of sociology. We focused on his central ideas, such as the evolutionary doctrine, the organic analogy and finally the evolution of societies, firstly in terms of composition from simple to compound and so on and then in terms of transition from military to industrial societies

MODULE II:

EMILE DURKHEIM

2.1	Social Fact, Collective Conscience
2.2	Social Solidarity, Division of Labour
2.3	Theory of Suicide, Sacred and Profane

1. Introduction

This module discusses the contribution of Durkheim for the classical sociological theories. Emile Durkheim, often referred to as the founder of sociology, was born April 15, 1858 in Epinal, France. Appointed to the first professorship of sociology in the world, he worked tirelessly over three decades as a lecturer and writer to establish sociology as a distinct discipline with its own unique theoretical and methodological foundation. After an illustrious career, first in Bordeaux and then after 1902in Paris at the Sorbonne, Durkheim died in November 1917.

Durkheim legitimized sociology in France, and his work ultimately became a dominant force in the development of sociology in general and of sociological theory in particular. His work was informed by the disorders produced by the general

social changes discussed earlier in this chapter, as well as by others (such as industrial strikes, disruption of the ruling class, church-state discord, the rise of political anti-Semitism) more specific to the France of Durkheim's time. In fact, most of his work was devoted to the study of social order. His view was that social disorders are not a necessary part of the modern world and could be reduced by social reforms.

2. Social Fact

The concept of social fact was defined by the French sociologist E ´ mile Durkheim, in his book on the Rules of Sociological Method (1982), as ways of feeling, thinking, and acting external to and exercising constraint over the individual. Durkheim's emphasis on social facts was part of his critique of psychological theories of human behavior and society. In his book, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, published in 1895, Durkheim (1950: 3) is concerned with the second task and calls social facts the subject matter of sociology. Durkheim (1950) defines social facts as "ways of acting, thinking and feeling, external to the individual and endowed with a power of coercion by reason of which they control him". To Durkheim society is a reality suigeneris**.** He considered society as sui generis. It is always present and has no point of origin. Society comes into being by the association of individuals.

Hence society represents a specific reality which has its own characteristics. This unique reality of society is separate from other realities studied by physical or biological sciences. Further, societal reality is apart from individuals and is over and above them. Thus the reality of society must be the subject matter of sociology. A scientific understanding of any social phenomenon must emerge from the 'collective' or associational characteristics manifest in the social structure of a society. While

working towards this end, Durkheim developed and made use of a variety of sociological concepts. Collective representations are one of the leading concepts to be found in the social thought of Durkheim. Before learning about 'collective representations' it is necessary that you understand what Durkheim meant by 'social facts'.

For Durkheim, sociology was the "science of civilization". He thus embarked on the analysis of what he called social facts, that is, all those *external* and *collective* ways in which society shapes, structures, and constrains our behavior. Durkheim states: "A social fact is any way of acting … [that is] capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; or which is general over the whole of a given society, whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations". Social facts – "the beliefs, tendencies, and practices of the group taken collectively" – are what sociologists study (and not individual psychological facts or physical or biological facts, though these may impinge on social facts).

Durkheim based his scientific vision of sociology on the fundamental principle, i.e., the objective reality of social facts. Social fact is that way of acting, thinking or feeling etc., which is more or less general in a given society. Durkheim treated social facts as things. They are real and exist independent of the individual's will or desire. They are external to individuals and are capable of exerting constraint upon them. In other words they are coercive in nature. Further social facts exist in their own right. They are independent of individual manifestations. The true nature of social facts lies in the collective or associational characteristics inherent in society. Legal codes and customs, moral rules, religious beliefs and practices, language etc. are all social facts.

As we discussed, Durkheim developed a distinctive conception of the subject matter of sociology and then tested it in an empirical study. In *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895/1982), Durkheim argued that it is the special task of sociology to study what he called *social lfacts* (Nielsen, 2005a, 2007a). He conceived of social facts as forces (Takla and Pope, 1985) and structures that are external to, and coercive of, the individual. The study of these large-scale structures and forces—for example, institutionalized law and shared moral beliefs—and their impact on people became the concern of many later sociological theorists (Parsons, for example). In *Suicide* (1897/1951), Durkheim reasoned that if he could link such an individual behavior as suicide to social causes (social facts), he would have made a persuasive case for the importance of the discipline of sociology.

But Durkheim did not examine why individual *A* or *B* committed suicide; rather, he was interested in the causes of differences in suicide rates among groups, regions, countries, and different categories of people (for example, married and single). His basic argument was that it was the nature of, and changes in, social facts that led to differences in suicide rates. For example, a war or an economic depression would create a collective mood of depression that would in turn lead to increases in suicide rates. Durkheim developed a distinctive view of sociology and sought to demonstrate its usefulness in a scientific study of suicide.

In *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895/1982), Durkheim differentiated between two types of social facts—material and nonmaterial. Although he dealt with both in the course of his work, his main focus was on *nonmaterial social facts* (for example, culture, social institutions) rather than *material social facts* (for example, bureaucracy, law). This concern for nonmaterial social facts was already clear in his

earliest major work, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893/1964). His focus there was a comparative analysis of what held society together in the primitive and modern cases. He concluded that earlier societies were held together primarily by nonmaterial social facts, specifically, a strongly held common morality, or what he called a strong *collective conscience*. However, because of the complexities of modern society, there had been a decline in the strength of the collective conscience.

The primary bond in the modern world was an intricate division of labor, which tied people to others in dependency relationships. However, Durkheim felt that the modern division of labor brought with it several "pathologies"; it was, in other words, an inadequate method of holding society together. Given his conservative sociology, Durkheim did not feel that revolution was needed to solve these problems. Rather, he suggested a variety of reforms that could "patch up" the modern system and keep it functioning. Although he recognized that there was no going back to the age when a powerful collective conscience predominated, he did feel that the common morality could be strengthened in modern society and that people thereby could cope better with the pathologies that they were experiencing.

According to Durkheim, social facts are collective phenomena and, as such, make up the distinctive subject matter of sociology. Social facts can be embodied in social institutions, such as religions, political forms, kinship structures, or legal codes. There are also more diffuse social facts; for example, mass behavior of crowds and the collective trends identifiable in statistical rates of social phenomena such as suicide and crime. Institutions are an especially central concern of sociology as a social science.

Durkheim insisted that social facts should be treated as things. They are realities in their own right, with their own laws of organization, apart from the ways these facts might appear to the individual's consciousness. Durkheim thought that sociology would have no distinctive subject matter if society itself did not exist as an objective reality. Thus, sociology and psychology represent independent levels of analysis.

3. 1. Types of Social Facts

Durkheim saw social facts as lying along a continuum. First, on one extreme are structural or morphological social phenomena. They make up the substratum of collective life. By this he meant the number and nature of elementary parts of which society is composed, the way in which the morphological constituents are arranged and the degree to which they are fused together. In this category of social facts are included the distribution of population over the surface of the territory, the forms of dwellings, nature of communication system etc.

Secondly, there are institutionalized forms of social facts. They are more or less general and widely spread in society. They represent the collective nature of the society as a whole. Under this category fall legal and moral rules, religious dogma and established beliefs and practices prevalent in a society.

Thirdly, there are social facts, which are not institutionalised. Such social facts have not yet acquired crystallized forms. They lie beyond the institutionalised norms of society. Also this category of social facts has not attained a total objective and independent existence comparable to the institutionalised ones. Also their externality to and ascendancy over and above individuals is not yet complete. These social facts have been termed as social currents. Forexample, sporadic

currents of opinion generated in specific situations; enthusiasm generated in a crowd; transitory outbreaks in an assembly of people; sense of indignity or pity aroused by specific incidents, etc.

All the above mentioned social facts form a continuum and constitute social milieu of society. Further Durkheim made an important distinction in terms of normal and pathological social facts. A social fact is normal when it is generally encountered in a society of a certain type at a certain phase in its evolution. Every deviation from this standard is a pathological fact. For example, some degree of crime is inevitable in any society. Hence according to Durkheim crime to that extent is a normal fact. However, an extraordinary increase in the rate of crime is pathological. A general weakening in the moral condemnation of crime and certain type of economic crisis leading to anarchy in society are other examples of pathological facts.

3. 2. Main Characteristics of Social Facts

In Durkheim's view sociology as an objective science must conform to the model of the other sciences. It posed two requirements: first the 'subject' of sociology must be specific. And it must be distinguished from the 'subjects' of all other sciences. Secondly the 'subject' of sociology mustbe such as to be observed and explained. Similar to the way in which facts are observed and explained in other sciences. For Durkheim this 'subject'of sociology is the social fact, and that social facts must be regarded as 'things'.

The main characteristics of social facts are (i) externality, (ii) constraint,(iii) independence, and (iv) generality. Social facts, according to Durkheim, exist outside individual consciences.

Their existence is external to the individuals. For example, domestic ,civic or contractual obligations are defined externally to the individual in laws and customs. Religious beliefs and practices exist outside and prior to the individual. An individual takes birth in a society and leaves it afterbirth death, however social facts are already given in society and remain in existence irrespective of birth or death of an individual. For example language continues to function independently of any single individual.

The other characteristic of social fact is that it exercises a constraint on individuals. Social fact is recognized because it forces itself on the individual. For example, the institutions of law, education, beliefs etc. are already given to everyone from without. They are commanding and obligatory for all. There is constraint, when in a crowd, a feeling or thinking imposes itself on everyone. Such a phenomenon is typically social because its basis, its subject is the group as a whole and not one individual inparticular. A social fact is that which has more or less a general occurrence in a society. Also it is independent of the personal features of individuals or universal attributes of human nature. Examples are the beliefs, feelings and practices of the group taken collectively. In sum, the social fact is specific. It is born of the association of individuals. It represents a collective content of social group or society. It differs in kind from what occurs in individual consciousness. Social facts can be subjected to categorisation and classification. Above all social facts form the subject matter of the science of sociology

In his classic study Suicide, Durkheim introduced the sociological use of statistics, demonstrating that different suicide rates could be explained on the basis of differential patterns of social connectedness when they could not be explained on the basis of individual psychology. For instance, individual

characteristics do not explain why older men commit more suicide, but their unmarried – unconnected – status does. In addition to introducing the use of statistics, Durkheim also used various qualitative and archival methods, particularly in his research on law and religion.

4. Division of Labour

Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society,* his doctoral dissertation and his first major work, was published in 1893. He held that as volume and density of population increases in a given area there is an increase in interaction and struggle for survival. Social differentiation is practiced in modern societies to overcome this struggle for survival between individuals.

The individuals are more dependent on one another for specialized functions and this leads to social cohesion and increase in individual autonomy. In modern societies there is an increase of individualism but there is also a need to maintain social solidarity. In his writings, Durkheim explained how individuals relate to one another and to society by the social bonds. His doctoral dissertation on *Division of Labour in Society* focused on the concept of 'social solidarity'. He was influenced by Rousseau's thinking that social solidarity is neither dependent on politics nor economy.

Durkheim held that solidarity can be expressed in two distinct ways which are 'mechanical' and 'organic'. In small societies with mechanical solidarity, individual autonomy is lowest and society is characterized by likeness of beliefs. There is no specialization of tasks and very little division of labour. Collective conscience pervades amongst all individuals in the group. The links bonding the individual to the social whole is intense and there is perfect social integration. In such a society

the institution of religion is dominant and an individual's place in society is determined by kinship. There is a system of penal law which punishes crimes violently so as to reaffirm the core beliefs and values. This law is repressive and severely punishes the offence.

On the other hand, in societies with organic solidarity there is greater division of labour and individuals are dependent on one another for specialized tasks rather than on society as a whole. Such societies are dense and cover a large geographical area. The political, legal and economic institutions are more specialized and the force of the collective conscience over the individuals is weakened. There are greater individual differences between individuals and the integration of individuals when the social whole is weakened. Restitutive law is operative and aims at restoring the wrongs to their original state.

While the foregoing theorists contributed substantially to the understanding of the division oflabor, Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893) stands as the classic sociological statement of the causes and consequences of the historical shift from ''mechanical solidarity'' to ''organic solidarity.'' The former is found in smaller, less-advanced societies where families and villages are mostly self-sufficient, independent, and united by similarities. The latter is found in larger, urbanized societies where specialization creates interdependence among social units.

Following Spencer's lead, Durkheim noted that the specialization of functions always accompanies the growth of a society; he also observed that increasing population density—the urbanization of society that accompanies modernization—greatly increases the opportunities for further increases in the division of labor. It should be noted that the shift to a modern division of labor could not have occurred without a preexisting solidarity; in

his chapter on ‘‘organic and contractual solidarity’’ he departed from Spencer’s utilitarian explanation of social cohesion, and noted that the advanced division of labor can occur only among members of an existing society, where individuals and groups are united by pre-existing similarities (of language, religion, etc.).

A sense of trust, obligation, and interdependencies essential for any large group in which there are many diverse roles; indirect exchanges occur; and individuals form smaller sub groupings based on occupational specialization. All of these changes create high levels of interdependence, but within creasing specialization, and different world views develop, along with different interests, values, and belief systems. This is the problem Durkheim saw in the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity; he feared the ‘‘anomie’’ or lack of cohesion that might result from a multiplicity of views, languages, and religions within a society (as in the France of his times, and even more so today).

Durkheim was also concerned with the problems of inequality in modern industrial society. He noted how the ‘‘pathological form of the division of labor’’ posed a threat to the full development of social solidarity (Giddens 1971). Although many simplistic analyses of Durkheim’s approach suggest otherwise, he dealt at length with the problems of ‘‘the class war’’ and the need for justice and fraternity.

As we mentioned, in *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893) he examined the transformation of societies from mechanical to organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity was based on a strong collective consciousness and organized around segmental groups, primarily extended kinship structures. The result was a society based on the similarity among its individual members and social units.

Organic solidarity was rooted in mutual interdependence of activities in the division of labor, where the collective consciousness became less strong and, thus, there appeared a greater individuation of thought and conduct. The cause of the change from mechanical to organic solidarity was found in social morphology; in particular, an increase in the overall population volume, an increase in society's material density (i.e., the number of people in a given territory), and an increased moral or dynamic density (i.e., communication and interaction among groups).

5. Mechanical Solidarity and Organic Solidarity

Durkheim, as we have seen, identifies two opposing social types. The first— pre-modern society—is characterized by an undifferentiated social structure, a strong collective consciousness, a homogeneous population, and a legal code consisting primarily of penal laws with repressive sanctions. The second— modern society—is characterized by a highly differentiated social structure, a weak collective consciousness, a heterogeneous population, and a legal code consisting primarily of cooperative laws with restitutive sanctions.

This dichotomy goes even deeper. The process of social evolution, Durkheim insists, is simultaneously a process of "moral evolution." The contrast between these two social types extends to the moral rules and bonds of social solidarity characteristic of each. This is the crux of Durkheim's argument. Pre-modern and modern society differ in the glue that holds them together, "mechanical solidarity" for the first and "organic solidarity" for the second. In the pre-modern era, social solidarity derives from people's resemblances.

Individuals form a cohesive community because they live similar lives and think similar thoughts. The collective

consciousness is the fundamental basis of this type of social solidarity. When individuals threaten this sacred order, when they deviate from shared values, beliefs, and practices, they face the wrath of a punitive penal system. The strength of the collective consciousness and the continuity of society are ultimately dependent on the coercive power of repressive sanctions. This kind of solidarity, which Durkheim calls "mechanical," requires the complete suppression of individuality. Where mechanical solidarity prevails, the individual "does not belong to himself; he is literally a thing at the disposal of society." The moral order of the pre-modern world is strong "only if the individual is weak."

	Mechanical solidarity	Organic solidarity
Basis of solidarity	Resemblances	Differences
Nature of society	Pre-industrial	Industrial
Substratum	Segmental	Organized
Population	Low volume	High volume
Moral and physical density	Low	High
Interdependence	Low	High
Social bonds	Weak	Strong
Law	Repressive	Restitutive

As the above table shows, in mechanical solidarity individuals are strongly attracted to each other through what Durkheim calls 'resemblance'. An integral solidarity based on a similarity and a common identity reaches its highest stage through the *conscience collective* which exercises a strong centripetal pull on individual members. Personal identity and collective identity become fused: 'From this results a solidarity *sui generis*, which, born of resemblances, directly links the individual to society' (Durkheim, 1933).

This is found in highly cohesive, relatively small-scale societies based on kinship relations and cooperation. Typically reaching for naturalistic analogies, Durkheim compares mechanical solidarity to the molecules of inorganic bodies that have no independent existence of their own. We call it [mechanical solidarity] only by analogy to the cohesion which unites the elements of an inanimate body, as opposed to that which makes a unity out of the elements of a living body. What justifies the term is that the link which thus unites the individual to society is wholly analogous to that which attaches a thing to a person. The individual conscience considered in this light, is a simple dependent upon the collective type and follows all of its movements, as the possessed object follows that of its owner. (Durkheim, 1933)

In extreme cases of mechanical solidarity the individual personality is completely submerged by an undifferentiated homogeneous social mass. Any infringement of mechanical solidarity is met with brutally repressive sanctions. This type of solidarity is expressed in a large number of repressive laws against any violation of the collective will. Mechanical solidarity is 'positive', direct, unconditional and unmediated. It produces inner unity through collective feelings of inclusion and belonging. Durkheim gives the example of the Iroquois tribes of North

America as an almost 'pure' example of a people who live without specialized functions or privileged hierarchies or private property in a sort of early communism. The individual is wholly absorbed by the clan (Durkheim, 1933).

The same basic clan structure is repeated across 'a segmental society', defined by strong similarities: For segmental organization to be possible, the segments must resemble one another; without that they would not be united. And they must differ; without this, they would lose themselves in each other and be effaced (Durkheim, 1933). In some cases they form a simple linear series of contiguous groups like families or villages. In others cases, several clans form a definite and distinctly new union, like a tribe or a confederation. Mechanical solidarity is most sharply defined when the *conscience collective* is expressed through the medium of a defined focal point of family or kin, 'a community of blood'.

Durkheim tried to avoid idealizing early societies and noted the existence of despotic forms of mechanical solidarity under the unilateral centralized power invested in a chief or master. In societies where the main form of solidarity is 'organic' individuals are engaged in specialized functions in an advanced division of labour. Here individuals cohere precisely because of their difference or dissimilarity from each other. Durkheim names this solidarity 'organic' from another analogy drawn from nature. Each organ, in effect, has it special physiognomy, its autonomy. And, moreover, the unity of the organism is as great as the individuation of the parts is more marked. On one side, the more labour is socially divided, the more dependent individuals become on society. On the other side, the more labour is socially divided, the more uniquely personal and specialized it becomes.

Social heterogeneity expresses the development of peculiar, unique personalities. Compared to the almost total control exercised over individuals by mechanical solidarity, the organic variant allows for greater individual autonomy, spontaneity and enterprise. Social obligations are not quite so repressive and limiting. Individuals are linked by particular functions, primarily occupation, rather than by kinship structures. Functional integration of occupational specialization displaces and opposes alternative traditional sources of integration such as heredity.

Integration based on specialized function strengthens personal conscience at the expense of the *conscience collective*. Occupational structure assumes a more central place for coordinating social cohesion. Occupational morality is not subject to the same harsh punishments as breaches of public morality. Restitutive law becomes more widespread than repressive law. Occupational functions depend upon cooperation and compromise rather than coercion and repression.

Consequently, even where society relies most completely upon the division of labour, it does not become a jumble of juxtaposed atoms, between which it can establish only external, transient contacts. Rather the members are united by ties which extend deeper and far beyond the short moments during which the exchange is made. Each of the functions that they exercise is, in a fixedway, dependent upon others, and with them forms a solidary system.(Durkheim, 1933)Spontaneous cooperation in the advanced division of labour is intrinsically moral in nature. A new ‘moral or dynamic density’ emerges from the growing size of population, urban living and improved communications.

6. Suicide

On Suicide, Durkheim continued his quest to legitimate the discipline of sociology and establish its scientific credentials. The topic of suicide, which on the surface would seem to be anything but a social phenomenon, presented him with a challenging opportunity to further substantiate the existence of a realm of distinctly social facts and to apply and illustrate the methodological principles set forth in *The Rules*.

With *Suicide* he also resumed his exploration of key themes from earlier writings, including the problem of social solidarity and the relationship between the individual and society. Beyond all this, however, Durkheim had an even more far-reaching agenda. The study of suicide, he promised, would also serve a more practical purpose. It would shed light on "the causes of the general contemporary maladjustment being undergone by European societies" and suggest "remedies which may relieve it."

As with crime or any other form of deviance, Durkheim explains, a certain amount of suicide is to be expected in any society. While such "normal" cases are tragic for those affected, they do not constitute a social problem properly speaking. The rate of suicide throughout much of Europe in the nineteenth century was on the rise, however, reaching levels that could only imply the existence of a "pathological state."

Along with many of his contemporaries, Durkheim looked upon the high incidence of suicide as yet another symptom of social dissolution, a product of the wrenching changes occurring with the emergence and rapid development of industrial society. "What we see in the rising tide of voluntary deaths is . . . a state of crisis and upheaval which cannot continue without danger." Durkheim took up the study of suicide to demonstrate

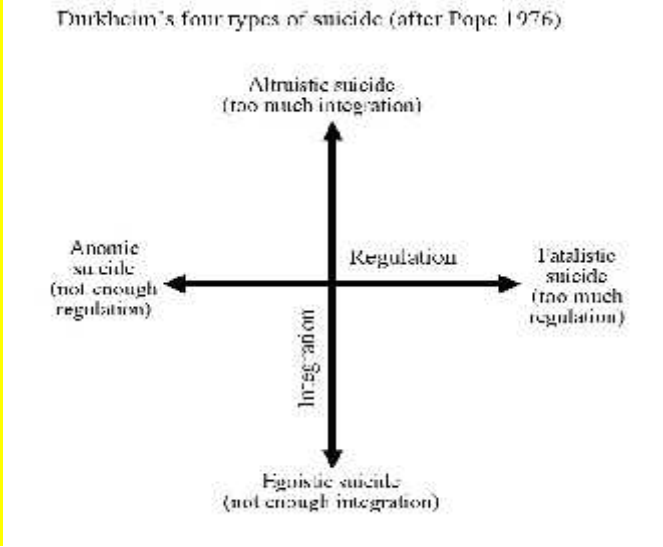
not only the explanatory value of sociology, but its diagnostic and practical value as well.

In *Suicide* (1897) Durkheim studied suicide rates as measurable manifestations of prior social facts. He argued that suicide rates were correlated with differing social circumstances and created a theory of four social causes of suicide, two of them endemic to modern society. Egoistic suicide emerged from a lack of integration of the individual into social groups, especially the family, the religious group, and the political community. Since familial, religious, and political ties were weakening in modern society, egoism was the most frequent contemporary cause of suicide. He suggested that the reintegration of the individual into society might be performed by strengthening the role of occupational or professional groups.

Anomic suicide resulted from the failure of another class of social facts, namely social norms, to regulate the individual's desires. It occurred especially during fluctuating economic circumstances, but could emerge in any setting where the individual's existing standards of conduct and expectations were radically disrupted. Durkheim emphasized that such social causes operated independently from the individual incidence of suicide and represented a level ofsocial facts which could be understood only through a new science of sociology.

Suicide in traditional and modern societies would therefore have to be understood in entirely different terms – for Durkheim, more proof that suicide was a function of social relations. This approach differs from that of many contemporary sociologists who use statistics to measure and predict the behavior of individuals as effected by their orientations toward social goals, values, and sanctions. The focus on individuals and their relationship to social factors runs counter to the method

Durkheim proposed: demonstrating the impact of social facts, assessing solidarity mechanisms, and measuring the group level effects of beliefs and values.



As Ritzer explained, Durkheim's theory of suicide can be seen more clearly if we examine the relation between the types of suicide and his two underlying social facts—integration andregulation. Integration refers to the strength of the attachment thatwe have to society. Regulation refers to the degree of external constraint on people.For Durkheim, the two social currents are continuous variables, and suiciderates go up when either of these currents is too low or too high. We therefore have four types of suicide. If integration is high, Durkheim callsthat type of suicide altruistic. Low integration results in an increase in egoisticsuicides. Fatalistic suicide is associated with high regulation, and anomic suicidewith low regulation.

- ***Egoistic Suicide:*** High rates of *egoistic suicide* are likely to be found in societies or groupsin which the individual is not well integrated into the larger social unit. This lack ofintegration leads to a feeling that the individual is not part of society, but this alsomeans that society is not part of the individual. Durkheim believed that the best partsof a human being—our morality, values, and sense of purpose—come from society.An integrated society provides us with these things, as well as a general feeling ofmoral support to get us through the daily small indignities and trivial disappointments.Without this, we are liable to commit suicide at the smallest frustration.

- ***Altruistic Suicide:*** The second type of suicide discussed by Durkheim is altruistic suicide. Whereas egoistic suicide is more likely to occur when social integration is too weak, *altruistic suicide* is more likely to occur when "social integration is too strong". The individual is literally forced into committing suicide. When integration is low, people will commit suicide because they have no greater good to sustain them. When integration is high, they commit suicide in the name of that greater good.

- ***Anomic Suicide:*** The third major form of suicide discussed by Durkheim is *anomic suicide,* which is more likely to occur when the regulative powers of society are disrupted. Such disruptions are likely to leave individuals dissatisfied because there is little control over their passions, which are free to run wild in an insatiable race for gratification. Rates of anomic suicide are likely to rise whether the nature of the disruption is positive (for example, an economic boom) or negative (an economic depression). Either type of disruption renders the collectivity temporarily incapable of exercising its

authority over individuals. Such changes put people in new situations in which the old norms no longer apply but new ones have yet to develop.

- ***Fatalistic Suicide***: There is a little-mentioned fourth type of suicide—fatalisticSuicide. 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 described those who are more likely to commit fatalistic suicide as "persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline."

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

7. Elementary forms of Religious life

The Elementary Forms of Religious Life was published in 1912. Durkheim was interested in the study of religion as early as 1902 because he regarded as a major institution in society. Also most of the articles in his sociological journal, L Année Sociologique focused on the subject of religion. In The Elementary Forms of Religious Life he wanted to explore the elements or the constituents of religion which make religious life possible. He turned towards primitive religion and took an evolutionary approach by assuming that by studying the basic structure of primitive religion the constituents of religion in general could be understood. He propounded a scientific study of

religion based on observation and exploration. He defined religion as

> "a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions – beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church". (2001: 46)

For Durkheim, religion helped people make sense of the world and religion personifies the society. He held that religion is made up of beliefs and rituals. Beliefs for Durkheim were the ideas that were focused towards the sacred. Rituals on the other hand were the actions that were directed towards the sacred. He held that universally the religious worldview is divided into two domains that is the sacred and the profane. A thing, belief or act is sacred because it is believed to be sacred by the society.

7.1 Totemism

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim (2001) wanted to understand how moral authority produces social solidarity by examining what he thought was its simplest or most elementary form: 'totemism'. A totem is 'a symbol, a material expression of something else' (2001: 154). On the totem can be inscribed as any emblem or blazon considered sacred, usually animals or plants. Totemism is the name given to the visible sacred object that social groups worship. It is the tangible expression of 'god' and, at the same time, the symbol of a particular society. It is a moral force given material form.

For Durkheim, totemism is the original form of all subsequent religious life and, by extension, collective life in general. Social life is only made possible by a vast organization

of collective representations. The collective only becomes self-conscious of its own existence by fixing on some material object. Objects and society facilitate each other. The totem both expresses collective life and helps to create it (Durkheim, 2001: 175). The totem's 'real essence' is that it is only the material form taken by an immaterial substance or unseen energy of a permanent, anonymous and impersonal social force (2001: 140–41). Totemism outlives individuals and lends the social group a sense of eternal existence.

Totemism could not merely superimpose onto reality an unreal world of monstrous aberrations and 'inexplicable hallucinations'. The scared object – the totem – is merely a focal point for collective identity and social structure. Religious exaltation is real exaltation about the moral authority of society. Totems are misrecognized only to the extent that the symbol seems to be an autonomous force. In reality, the god of the clan is really the clan itself, 'but transfigured and imagined in the physical form of the plant or animal species that serve as totems' (2001: 154).

8.2 The Sacred and the Profane

According to Durkheim (2001) all religious belief systems, from the most basic to the most complex, fundamentally divide the world into two mutually exclusive spheres: the sacred and the profane. The sacred represents the ideal that society sets for itself in contrast to the profane world of private egos and mundane interests. Any object might be considered sacred – a tree, a rock, a house, an animal, human hair, ashes and so on – as might any words, phrases or gestures carried out by a specially consecrated person. The sacred can be 'superimposed' on a wide range of objects. Since nothing is inherently 'sacred' this quality must be acquired from somewhere else.

In religion everything can be assigned to a class of sacred things radically divided from a class of profane things. Religious belief structures the world into the pure and impure, holy and sacrilegious, divine and diabolical, consecration and contamination. Durkheim takes this as the starting point for understanding how all human groups are based on a radical duality that assigns dignity, privilege or distinction to one thing, not given by palpable experience, over other things that are based in more practical and mundane activities of everyday life. When things are considered sacred they are arranged into a unified system.

Conclusion

In this module we started our discussion with social and intellectual context in which Durkheim developed his conception of sociology as an independent scientific discipline with its distinct subject matter. His life and works are regarded as a sustained effort at laying the legitimate base of sociology as a discipline. He identified sociology as a study of social facts and developed rules for their observation and explanation. In his studies on sociological methods he explain different aspects of social facts. He demonstrated the nature of these studies through the study of division of labour in different types of solidarities, of suicide-rates in different types of societies, and the study of Religion in a single type.

In this module we discussed Durkheim's three major works. First work was *The Division of Labor in Society,* in which he argued that the collective conscience of societies with mechanical solidarity had been replaced by a new organic solidarity based on mutual interdependence in a society organized by a division of labor. He investigated the difference between mechanical and organic solidarity through an analysis of their

different legal systems. He argued that mechanical solidarity is associated with repressive laws while organic solidarity is associated with legal systems based on restitution.

In the second one Durkheim studied suicide. He looked at different aspects of suicide and its social causes and consequences. Durkheim differentiated among four types of suicide—egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic—and showed how each is affected by different changes in social currents. The study of suicide was taken by Durkheim and his supporters as evidence that sociology has a legitimate place in the social sciences. After all, it was argued, if sociology could explain so individualistic an act as suicide, it certainly could be used to explain other, less individual aspects of social life.

In his last major work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* Durkheim focused on another aspect of culture: religion. In his analysis of primitive religion, Durkheim sought to show the roots of religion in the social structure of society. It is society that defines certain things as sacred and others as profane. Durkheim demonstrated the social sources of religion in his analysis of primitive totemism and its roots in the social structure of the clan. Durkheim concluded that religion and society are one and the same, two manifestations of the same general process.

MODULE III
KARL MARX

3.1	Economic Determinism, Dialectical Materialism, Historical Materialism
3.2	Class and Class Struggle
3.3	Theory of Social Change

1. Introduction

In the previous module we discussed the development of modern sociological theories in the 18th and 19th century Europe. We also discussed the context in which sociology emerged in Europe and learnt about the impact of the Industrial Revolution on its founders. In this module we will deal with one of the founders, namely, Karl Marx. Though he focused on economic analysis of the 19th century Europe and capitalist development, his idea was full of sociological insights.

We start with the concept of historical materialism, which is the scientific core of Marx's sociological thought. Therefore, it is necessary to situate historical materialism within the overall context of Marx's work and his contributions to sociological theory. With this background we will discuss about the notion of class as used by Karl Marx. To understand class and its meaning, we have to study in detail about the constitution of a class and different criteria to call any collectivity a class. And we will look

at how and why classes come into conflict with each other. We will understand the impact of these class conflicts on the history of development of society.

In the last part we will discuss two key concepts in Marxian sociology, namely, alienation and commodity fetishism. And we will looks at how these two concepts will help us to understand modern capitalist system. In the final session the concept of social change is also discussed. Marx identified class conflict and class straggle as a way forward for social change. Historically, Marx identified different stages of social evolution according to the mode of production.

2. Karl Marx: Biographic Sketch

Marx was born into a middle class household, the oldest male of six surviving children. His parents had Jewish origins, but converted to Protestantism in response to Prussian anti Semitism. Marx was exposed to Enlightenment thought and socialist ideas in his teenage years. He had born on May 5, 1818, in Trier, one of the oldest cities in Germany, to Heinrich and Henrietta Marx. Both parents came from a long line of rabbis. His father was the first in his family to receive a secular education (he could recite numerous passages from Enlightenment thinkers)—Heinrich was a lawyer who allowed himself to be baptized Protestant in order to avoid anti-Semitism; a move that was not entirely successful.

As a university student, he joined the Berlin Doctors Club, a group of left wing intellectuals who embraced Hegel's philosophical vision of humanity, making itself historically through its own labor. They opposed right wing Hegelians, who stressed his theory of the state and justified the Prussian regime. Left Hegelians wanted to complete philosophy's break with religion and fashion an approach that favored progressive change.

Marx finished his doctoral dissertation in 1841, but did not complete the second thesis required to enter German academe. After left Hegelian Bruno Bauer lost his academic position for political reasons, Marx knew, especially given his Jewish roots, that this door was closed to him. He decided to try journalism. In 1842 Marx wrote for the progressive Rheinische Zeitung and soon became its editor.

Politically, Marx's childhood and youth fell in that period of European history when the reactionary powers (favoring monarchical political order) were attempting to eradicate from post Napoleonic Europe all traces of the French Revolution. There was, at the same time, a liberal movement (favoring autonomy of the individual and standing for the protection of political and civil liberties) in Germany that was making itself felt. The movement was given impetus by the Revolution in France. In the late 1830s a further step toward radical criticism for extreme changes in existing socio-political conditions was made by the young Hegelians (a group of people following the philosophy of Hegel). This was the group with which Marx became formally associated when he was studying law and philosophy at the University of Berlin.

Because of his political affiliations, Marx was denied a university position by the government. Marx turned to writing and editing, but had to battle government censorship continually. In 1843, Marx moved to Paris with his new wife, Jenny von Westphalen. In Paris, he read the works of reformist thinkers who had been suppressed in Germany and began his association with Friedrich Engels. During his time in Paris, Marx wrote several documents that were intended for self clarification (they were never published in his lifetime) but have since become important Marxian texts (Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and The German Ideology, which was finished in Brussels).

Over the next several years, Marx moved from Brussels, back to Paris, and then to Germany. Much of his movement was associated with revolutions that broke out in Paris and Germany in 1848. That year also marks the publication of The Communist Manifesto. Finally, in 1849, Marx moved to London, where he remained. He spent the early years of the 1850s writing several historical and political pamphlets. In 1852, Marx began his studies at the British Museum. There he would sit daily from 10am to 7pm, studying the reports of factory inspectors and other documents that described the abuses of early capitalism. This research formed the basis of Das Kapital, his largest work. During this time, three of his children died of malnutrition.

Although he was the youngest member of the young Hegelians, Karl Marx inspired their confidence, respect and even admiration. They saw in him a 'new Hegel' or rather a powerful anti-Hegelian. Among other influences the intensive study of B.deSpinoza(1632-1677) and A. Hume(1711-1776) helped Marx to develop a positive conception of democracy. It went far beyond the notions held at the time by radical in Germany. The radicals consisted of a political group associated with views, practices and policies of extreme change.

The workers' movements were quiet after 1848, until the founding of the First International. Founded by French and British labor leaders at the opening of the London Exhibition of Modern Industry, the union soon had members from most industrialized countries. Its goal was to replace capitalism with collective ownership. Marx spent the next decade of his life working with the International. The movement continued to gain strength worldwide until the Paris Commune of 1871. The Commune was the first worker revolution and government. Three months after its formation, Paris was attacked by the French government. Thirty thousand unarmed workers were massacred.

Marx continued to study but never produced another major writing. His wife died in 1881 and his remaining daughter a year later. Marx died in his home on March 14, 1883.

3. Marx as Sociologist

Marx was not a sociologist and did not consider himself sociologist. Although his work is too broad to be encompassed by the term *sociology, there are many* sociological insights which to be found in Marx's entire works. But for the majority of early sociologists, his work was a negative force, something against which to shape their sociology. Until very recently, sociological theory, especially in America, has been characterized by either hostility to or ignorance of Marxian theory.

The basic reason for this rejection of Marx was ideological. Many of the early sociological theorists were inheritors of the conservative reaction to the disruptions of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Marx's radical ideas and the radical social changes he foretold and sought to bring to life were clearly feared and hated by such thinkers. Marx was dismissedas an ideologist. It was argued that he was not a serious sociological theorist. However, ideology per se could not have been the real reason for the rejection of Marx, because the work of Comte, Durkheim, and other conservative thinkers also was heavily ideological. It was the nature of the ideology, not the existence of ideology as such, that put off many sociological theorists. They were ready and eager to buy conservative ideology wrapped in a cloak of sociological theory, but not the radical ideology offered by Marx and his followers.

1. There were, of course, other reasons why Marx was not accepted by many early theorists. He seemed to be more an economist than a sociologist. Although the early sociologists

would certainly admit the importance of the economy, they would also argue that it was only one of a number of components of social life.

2. Another reason for the early rejection of Marx was the nature of his interests. Whereas the early sociologists were reacting to the disorder created by the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and later the Industrial Revolution, Marx was not upset by these disorders—or by disorder in general. Rather, what interested and concerned Marx most was the oppressiveness of the capitalist system that was emerging out of the Industrial Revolution. Marx wanted to develop a theory that explained this oppressiveness and that would help overthrow that system. Marx's interest was in revolution, which stood in contrast to the conservative concern for reform and orderly change.

3. Another difference worth noting is the difference in philosophical roots between Marxian and conservative sociological theory. Most of the conservative theorists were heavily influenced by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Among other things, this led them to think in linear, cause-and-effect terms. That is, they tended to argue that a change in *A* (say, the change in ideas during the Enlightenment) leads to a change in *B* (say, the political changes of the French Revolution). In contrast, Marx was most heavily influenced, as we have seen, by Hegel, who thought in dialectical rather than cause-and-effect terms. Among other things, the dialectic attunes us to the ongoing reciprocal effects of social forces. Thus, a dialectician would reconceptualize the example discussed above as a continual, ongoing interplay of ideas and politics.

4. Karl Marx: Dialectical and Historical Materialism

In this section we discuss the historical materialism which is the scientific core of Marx's sociological thought. Therefore, it is necessary to situate historical materialism within the overall context of Marx's work and his contributions to sociological theory.The unit deals first with the brief background of the philosophical and theoretical origins of historical materialism in the context of its intellectual and social milieu. Then we go on to a discussion of certain basic assumptions upon which the theory of historical materialism is built. This is followed by an exposition of the theory of historical materialism and Marx's reasons for refuting economic determinism. Finally, the unit lists certain important contributions of historical materialism to sociological theory.

'Historical materialism', the name given to the methodological approach developed by Marx, recognizes the essentially social character of life. Its central postulates can be stated succinctly.

'Materialism' refers to the following premises:

- social being determines consciousness
- human beings necessarily act collectively in society to establish the means of their own physical and social reproduction
- physical and social reproduction are mutually dependent on each other
- in the course of its reproduction societies develop distinctive structures of cooperation and competition known as modes of production

- ❖ beyond a minimal level of subsistence societies divide into antagonistic classes.

'Historical' refers to additional premises:

- ❖ there is a tendency for the productive forces of society to grow over time
- ❖ human beings make their own history within pre-given social conditions
- ❖ societies develop inner contradictions which are resolved either by revolutionary transformation or social implosion.

In Marx's time, there were two important ways of understanding the issue of reality: idealism and materialism. Idealism posits that reality only exists in our idea of it. While there may indeed be a material world that exists in and of itself, that world exists for humans only as it appears. The world around us is perceived through the senses, but this sense data is structured by innate cognitive categories. Thus, what appears to humans is not the world itself but our idea of it. On the other hand, materialism argues that all reality may be reduced to physical properties. In materialism, our ideas about the world are simple reflections; those ideas are structured by the innate physical characteristics of the universe.

Hegel was an idealist and argued that material objects (like a chair or a rock) truly and completely only exist in our concept of them. But Hegel took idealism to another level, using it to argue for the existence of God (the ultimate concept); he argued that the ideal took priority over the material world. According to Hegel, human history is a dialectical unfolding of

the Truth that reality consists of ideas and that the material world is nothing more than shadow.

> For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'the Idea', is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought.

Dialectic contains different elements that are naturally antagonistic to one another; Hegel called them the thesis and antithesis. The dialectic is like an argument or a dialog between elements that are locked together (The word dialectic comes from the Greek word dialektikos, meaning discourse or discussion.). For example, to understand "good," you must at the same time understand "bad." To comprehend one, you must understand the other: good and bad are locked in a continual dialog. Hegel argued that these kinds of conflicts would resolve themselves into a new element or synthesis, which in turn sets up a new dialectic: every synthesis contains a thesis that by definition has conflicting elements.

Marx liked the historical process implied in Hegel's dialectic, but he disagreed with its ideational base. Marx, as we have seen, argues that human beings are unique because they creatively produce materials to fill their own material needs. Since the defining feature of humanity is production, not ideas and concepts, then Hegel's notion of idealism is false, and the dialectic is oriented around material production and not ideas—the material dialectic. Thus, the dynamics of the historical dialectic are to be found in the economic system, with each

economic system inherently containing antagonistic elements. As the antagonistic elements work themselves out, they form a new economic system.

In *The German Ideology* Marx presents the most detailed account of the theory of history. In it, Marx set out to reformulate the work of the eminent German philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel. In contrast to previous philosophers who focused on explaining the roots of stability in the physical and social worlds (i.e., why things seemingly stayed the same), Hegel saw change as the motor of history. For Hegel, change was driven by a dialectical process in which a given state of being or idea contains within it the seeds of an opposing state of being or opposing idea. The resolution of the conflict produces yet a new state of being or idea. This synthesis, in turn, forms the basis of a new contradiction, thus continuing the process of change.

On the other hand, Marx breaks decisively from Hegel by insisting that it is *material* existence, not consciousness, that fuels historical change and the inevitable march toward freedom. Thus, Marx sought to take Hegel's idealism, which had the evolution of history "standing on its head," and "turn it right side up" in order to discover the real basis of the progression of human societies. Theoretically, this inversion is of utmost significance because it reflects a shift from a non-rationalist to a rationalist theoretical orientation.

The German Ideology is a pivotal writing because it offers the fullest treatment of Marx's materialist conception of history. It is in Marx's theory of historical materialism that we find one of his most important philosophical contributions, namely his conviction that ideas or interests have no existence independent of physical reality. In numerous passages, you will see Marx's rejection of Hegel's notion that ideas determine experience in

favor of the materialist view that experience determines ideas. For instance, Marx asserts, "Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process" (Marx and Engels 1846/1978:154). And again, "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (ibid.:155). In short, Marx argues that the essence of individuals, what they truly are and how they see the world, is determined by their material, economic conditions—"both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce"—in which they live out their very existence (ibid.:150).

In 'Preface' to *A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1959) Marx said that the actual basis of society is its economic structure. For Marx economic structure of society is made of its relations of production. The legal and political superstructure of society is based on relations of production. Marx says that relations of production reflect the stage of society's force of means of production. Thus, the term such as relations of production, forces of means of production and superstructure carry special connotations in Marxist thought. His contention is that the process of socio-political and intellectual life in general is conditioned by the mode of production of material life.

On the basis of this logic, Marx tries to constructs his entire view of history. He says that new developments of productive forces of society come in conflict with existing relations of production. When people become conscious of the state of conflict, they wish to bring an end to it. This period of history is called by Marx the period of social revolution. The revolution brings about resolution of conflict. It means that new forces of production take roots and give rise to new relations of production. Thus, you can see that for Marx, it is the growth of new productive forces which outlines the course of human

history. The productive forces are the powers society uses to produce material conditions of life. For Marx, human history is an account of development and consequences of new forces of material production. This is the reason why his view of history is given the name of historical materialism. In a nutshell, this is the theory of historical materialism.

In brief, we can say that Marx's theory of historical materialism states that all objects, whether living or inanimate, are subject to continuous change. The rate of this change is determined by the laws of dialectics. In other words, there are forces which bring about the change. You can call it the stage of antithesis. The actual nature of change, i.e., the stage of synthesis, will be, according to Marx, determined by the interaction of these two types of forces. Before explaining in some detail further connections which Marx makes to elaborate this theory, it is necessary to point out that different schools of Marxism provide differing explanations of this theory. We are here confined to a kind of standard version in our rendering of historical materialism. We should keep in mind that materialistic conception of history is not a rough and ready formulation for explaining different forms of social organisation.

To sum up, historical materialist perspective takes economic power as the prime dimension of social stratification and holds that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles. The main classes in the societies Engels and Marx studied most intensively were the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. More particularly, classical historical materialism postulated several trends supposedly characteristic of any society with private ownership of the means of production, such as machines and factories (capital goods) and free markets for capital, labor, and consumption goods.

According to the ‘‘general law of capitalist accumulation,’’ the longer the capitalist mode of production prevails, the more capital will have accumulated, leading to both higher profits for capital owners (the bourgeoisie) and to worsening living conditions for the people who live by their labor (the proletariat). Although recognizing in the early phases of the capitalist mode of production the presence of small and large proprietors as well as skilled and unskilled workers, the persistence of the capitalist mode of production would lead to a disappearance of the middle classes.

Small proprietors would become less common, as they lose out in the fierce competition from large proprietors. Workers skilled in using their hand tools would also become less common as proprietors replace them with cheaper unskilled workers operating machines. In addition, since the persistence of the capitalist mode of production is accompanied by ever deeper economic downturns, wages tend to fall while the percentage of unemployed workers rises.

5. Class and Class conflict

Marx’s sociology is, in fact, Sociology of the class struggle. This means one has to understand the Marxian concept of class in order to appreciate Marxian philosophy and thought. Marx has used the term social class throughout his works but explained it only in a fragmented form. The clearest passages on the concept of class structure can be found in the third volume of his famous work, *Capital* (1894). Under the title of ‘Social Classes’ Marx distinguished three classes, related to the three sources of income:

(a) owners of simple labour power or labourers whose main source of income is labour;

(b) owners of capital or capitalists whose main source of income is profit or surplus value;

(c) land owners whose main source of income is ground rent.

In this way the class structure of modern capitalist society is composed of three major classes viz., salaried labourers or workers, capitalists and landowners. At a broader level, society could be divided into two major classes i.e. the 'haves' (owners of land and / or capital) often called as bourgeoisie and the 'have-nots' (those who own nothing but their own labour power), often called as proletariats. Marx has tried to even give a concrete definition of social class. According to him 'a social class occupies a fixed place in the process of production'.

Marx and Engels famously set out the historical relation of classes early in *The Communist Manifesto* where they declared:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. (1998: 34–35)

In fact, none of these earlier modes of production were overthrown by the exploited class. It was not peasants that overthrew feudalism but the new, emerging 'middling sorts' of the capitalist class. Previous societies were divided hierarchically

into complex gradations of rank, somewhat obscuring the division into fundamental classes: 'In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serf; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations' (Marx and Engels, 1998: 35).

Modern society, Marx and Engels claim, simplifies class antagonisms, splitting society into 'two great hostile camps': bourgeois and proletarians. Engels later added a footnote to define what he took these terms to mean:

> By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage labourers who, in having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live. (Marx and Engels, 1998: 34)

Marx and Engels praise the bourgeois class for its revolutionary achievements: the overthrow of feudalism, the creation of a world market, technological dynamism, the ending of religious superstitions, urbanization, stimulating the creation of a world literature, all marvellous 'wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothiccathedrals' (1998: 38).In the process, capital organizes the proletariat into a class as 'the conditions of life are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labour, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level' (1998: 45). This is a process known as 'proletarianization'.

Increasingly, the lower strata of the middle class – shopkeepers, tradespeople and peasants – fall into the class of wage labourersas they are put out of business by the power of larger capitals. The proletariat develops just so long as it increases the amount of capital accumulated by the bourgeoisie. Wage labour is reduced to the status of acommodity, possessing only its labour power for sale, interchangeable with other commodities. Labour is alienated, a mere 'appendage of the machine', which controls the pace and skill of labour.

For Marx, class division and conflict between classes exist in all societies. Industrial society consists mainly of two conflicting classes: the bourgeoisie, owners of the means of production (the resources – land, factories, capital, and equipment – needed for the production and distribution of material goods); and the proletariat, who work for the owners of productive property. The owning class controls key economic, political, and ideological institutions, placing it inevitably in opposition to non owners as it seeks to protect its power and economic interests. ''Class struggle'' is the contest between opposing classes and it is through the dynamic forces that result from class awareness of conflicting interests that societal change is generated.

In terms of class conflict, or potential class conflict, Marx distinguished between a ''class in itself '' and a ''class for itself.'' The former comprises a social grouping whose constituents share the same relationship to the forces of production. However, for Marx, a social grouping only fully becomes a class when it forms a ''class for itself.'' At this stage, its members have achieved class consciousness and solidarity – a full awareness of their true situation of exploitation and oppression. Members of a class subsequently develop a common identity, recognize their shared interest, and unite, so creating class cohesion and ultimately taking recourse to revolutionary violence.

6. Theory of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism

Theories of alienation start with the writings of Marx, who identified the capacity for self-directed creative activity as the core distinction between humans and animals. If people cannot express their species being (their creativity), they are reduced to the status of animals or machines. In the essay "Alienated Labour" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*), Marx examines the condition of alienation or estrangement. For Marx, alienation is inherent in capitalism, because the process of production and the results of our labor confront us as a dominating power. It stems not from religiously rooted errors of consciousness, as Hegel argued, but from the material conditions in which we apply our essential productive capacities.

Marx argued that, under capitalism, workers lose control over their work and, as a consequence, are alienated in at least four ways.

1. They are alienated from the products of their labor. They no longer determine what is to be made or what use will be made of it. Work is reduced to being a means to an end – a means to acquire money to buy the material necessities of life.

2. Workers are alienated from the process of work. Someone else controls the pace, pattern, tools, and techniques of their work.

3. Because workers are separated from their activity, they become alienated from themselves. Non alienated work, in contrast, entails the same enthusiastic absorption and self realization as hobbies and leisure pursuits.

4. Alienated labor is an isolated endeavor, not part of a collectively planned effort to meet a group need.

Consequently, workers are alienated from others as well as from themselves. Marx argued that these four aspects of alienation reach their peak under industrial capitalism and that alienated work, which is inherently dissatisfying, would naturally produce in workers a desire to change the existing system. Alienation, in Marx's view, thus plays a crucial role in leading to social revolution to change society toward a non alienated future.

7. Commodity Fetishism

In Marx's pioneering critique of capitalism, he brought the commodity to the fore as a unit of analysis in the study of capitalist social relations. In his works, Marx refined the meaning of the term, suggesting that commodities were not simply objects that fulfilled needs, but that their seeming simpleutility served to mask the social and material relations that brought them into existence –particularly the human labor necessary to produce them. For Marx, commodities had a ''dual nature,'' which was comprised of their utility(or use value) and their value in the market (or exchange value).

Although a commodity was useful to the person who bought it because it satisfied some need, it was also useful to the person who sold it because its sale yielded value in excess of the cost of the labor and materials necessary to produce it, either in the form of other commodities or in money. Marx's refinement of the term was in response to the work of economists such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo, who treated commodities as if their value were strictly further facilitate the introduction of the notion of commodity fetishism into social theory. At the end of the nineteenth century, even as the role of fetishism in the evolution

of human social life was called into question, the centrality of capitalism and commodity exchange in the social organization of the Americas and Europe captured the attention of an emerging sociological discipline.

The rapid rise and rationalization of industrial development framed Max Weber's discussion of the relationship of (Christian) religious orientation and capitalist accumulation, and the attendant availability of a wider range of consumer goods informed Thorstein Veblen's analysis of the role of the commodity in bourgeois status hierarchies. What had been for Marx a sarcastic metaphor for the misapprehension of social relations as natural became increasingly a sincere heuristic for examining the role of commodities in the organization of daily social life: like its archaic precursor, the commodity fetish mediated between abstract economic forces and the actions of individuals.

8. Theory of Social Change

In Marx's analysis of the history of human society he identified four modes of productions and he mapped social change in the history according to the mode of productions may exist within any particular society at a given point in time. But in all forms of society there is one determinate kind of production which assigns rank and influence to all the others. Here we shall discuss each of the four modes of production, identified by Marx.

1. **Asiatic Mode of Production:** The concept of Asiatic mode of production refers to a specific original mode of production. This is distinct from the ancient slave mode of production or the feudal mode of production. The Asiatic mode of production is characteristic of primitive

communities in which ownership of land is communal. These communities are still partly organised on the basis of kinship relations. State power, which expresses the real or imaginary unity of these communities, controls the use of essential economic resources, and directly appropriates part of the labour and production of the community.

2. **Ancient Mode of Production:** It refers to the forms which precede capitalist production. In some of these terms slavery is seen as the foundation of the productive system. The relation of masters to slaves is considered as the very essence of slavery. In this system of production the master has the right of ownership over the slave and appropriates the products of the slave's labour. The slave is not allowed to reproduce. If we restrict ourselves to agricultural slavery, exploitation operates according to the following modalities: the slaves work the master's land and receive their subsistence in return. The master's profit is constituted by the difference between what the slaves produce and what they consume. But what is usually forgotten is that beyond this, the slaves are deprived of their own means of reproduction. The reproduction of slavery depends on the capacity of the society to acquire new slaves, that is, on an apparatus which is not directly linked to the capacities of demographic reproduction of the enslaving population. The rate of accumulation depends on the number of slaves acquired, and not directly on their productivity.

3. **Feudal Mode of Production:** Marx and Engels writing about feudalism tended to focus on the transition between the feudal and the capitalist modes of production. They were concerned with the 'existence form' of labour and the manner in which the products of labour were

appropriated by ruling classes. Just as capitalists exploited the workers or the 'proletariat', so did the feudal lords exploit their tenants or 'serfs'. Capitalists grabbed surplus value and feudal lords appropriated land rent from their serfs.

4. **Capitalist Mode of Production**: Capitalism refers to a mode of production in which capital is the dominant means of production. Capital can be in various forms. It can take the form of money or credit for the purchase of labour power and materials of production. It can be money or credit for buying physical machinery. In capitalist mode of production**,** the private ownership of capital in its various forms is in the hands of a class of capitalists. The ownership by capitalists is to the exclusion of the mass of the population.

In the *German Ideology* (1845-6), both Marx and Engels outlined their scheme of history. Here, the main idea was that based on a mode of production there was a succession of historical phases. Change from one phase to the next was viewed by them as a state of revolution brought about by conflicts between old institutions and new productive forces. It was only later on that both Marx and Engels devoted more time and studied English, French and American revolutions. They named them as bourgeois revolutions. Marx's hypothesis of bourgeois revolution has given us a perspective to look at social changes in Europe and America. But more than this, it has stimulated further research by scholars on this subject.

Secondly, Marx spoke of another kind of revolution. It pertained to communism. Marx viewed communism as a sequel to capitalism. Communism, according to Marx, would wipe out all class divisions and therefore would allow for a fresh start with

moral and social transformation. This was the vision both Marx and Engels carried in their minds for future society. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we find that their vision has not come true and communism has not had its sway around the world. All the same Marx's ideas have influenced the nature of growth of capitalism. Tempered with socialist ideas it is now beginning to acquire a human face.

Marx's concept of socialist revolution presupposes an era of shift from capitalism to socialism. He explained bourgeois revolution as a defeat of the aristocracy. This defeat came at the end of a long period of growth of capitalism. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie is, on the other hand, only the first phase of the revolutionary change from capitalism to socialism. According to Marx the socialistic phase of revolution would not be without classes, occupational division of labour and market economy etc. It is only in the higher phase of revolution there would be distribution of goods to each according to his needs. This would be the phase of communism. Thus, change to communism was perceived by Marx as a series of steps to completely revolutionise the entire mode of production.

In fact, Marx conceived intensification of class antagonism in capitalism, because the new forces of production do not correspond to the relations of production. There will be increasing gap between the levels of distribution of gains between the two classes. This shall leave the have-nots extremely alienated and conscious of their class interests. The new forces of production in capitalism are capable of mass production and will dump heaps of prosperity at the feet of bourgeoisie without helping the lot of proletariat, who would continue to suffer from misery and poverty. This shall accentuate the class consciousness and hasten the maturation of the conditions for socialist revolution. The socialist revolution according to Marx would be qualitatively

different from all the revolutions of the past as it would for the first time, after the beginning of history of inequality and exploitation, usher in a stage of classless society with a hope for all members of society.

9. Conclusion

This module we started with a biographical sketch of Marx and why he considered as an important figure in the history of sociological thought. Then we looked at the concept of historical materialism as a materialist interpretation of social, cultural and political phenomena. It propounds that social institutions and related values are determined by the mode of production processes rather than ideas in the explanation of history. However, the word 'determined', in the Marxian sense, refers to determination in the last analysis and should not be taken in an absolute sense.

According to Marx historical materialism is a dialectical theory of human progress. It regards history as the development of human beings' efforts to master the forces of nature and, hence, of production. Since all production is carried out within social organisation, history is the succession of changes in social system, the development of human relations gearedto productive activity (mode of production) in which the economic system forms the base and all other relationships, institutions, activities, and idea systems are "superstructural".

Marx had rejected the strong emphasis of the determining influence of cultural ideas as reflected in German historicism. For him, the development of sociology required an analysis of how the actual material and social conditions of people's lives influenced their consciousness and behavior aswell as their opportunities to develop their full human potential. With his focus

on the economic class structure, he saw class divisions in modern society deepening as a result of the advancing centralization of the means of production and capitalists' expanding levels of exploitation of workers in their efforts to increase their profits. Although the capitalist system was subject to periodic crises, their resolution should not be expected to end the process of exploitation and class conflict until the capitalist system is eventually overthrown through revolutionary struggle.

MODULE IV

MAX WEBER

4.1 Social Action-Types of Action, Ideal type, Verstehen Method

4.2 Power and Authority: Types of Authority, Bureaucracy

4.3 Religion and Economy- Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism

1. Introduction

In this module we will look at the contribution of Max Weber to the development of classical sociological theory. We will start with a brief biographical sketch of Weber's life and times. It will help us to understand intellectual ideas and perspectives that influenced his thought. This module is divided in to four parts. First part discusses three important concepts developed by Weber as a part of methodological inquiry in to the social world. These three concepts are Verstehen, Social Action and Ideal Type. Though this concepts we will discuss how Weber conceptualized Sociology as a mode of inquiry distinct from the natural sciences, with a distinctive subject matter concerning the meanings attributed by social actors to their actions in a specific historical context.

In the second part of the chapter we will analyse some of Weber's important contributions in understanding power and authority. We will start with a brief discussion of the sociological concepts of power and authority with special reference to Weber understands of the terms. And we discuss the three types of authorities Weber identifies such as traditional charismatic and rational-legal authority. And we will focus on bureaucracy though which the rational-legal authority is exercised in modern time.

In the third part of this module we will discuss one of the central themes in his work, namely, the idea of rationality and the process of rationalisation. The process of rationalization is a concept that touches almost all of Weber's work. This part of this module is divided into three sections. In the first section, you will get a brief description of the meanings of the terms 'rationality' and 'rationalisation'. The second section will highlight how Weber used the concept of rationality in his work. The issues taken up will be Protestantism, capitalism, bureaucracy and types of rationality.

In the last section of this module we will look at the relation between religious ethics and economic behavior. It examines the inter-relationship between religious beliefs and economic activity. And explain what Weber meant by the "spirit of capitalism" and contrasts it with "traditionalism". We then discuss certain aspects of the "Protestant ethic" which according to Weber, contributed to the development of capitalism in the West. This unit further clarifies the relationship between religious beliefs and economic activity by describing three of Weber's 'comparative religious studies', namely those of Confucianism in China, Judaism in ancient West Asia and Hinduism in India.

2. Biographical Sketch

Max Weber was born in Erfurt, Germany, in 1864. He was the eldest of eight children born to Max Weber Sr. and Helene Fallenstein Weber, although only six survived to adulthood. Max Jr. was a sickly child. When he was four years old, he became seriously ill with meningitis. Though he eventually recovered, throughout the rest of his life he suffered the physical and emotional after-effects of the disease, most apparently anxiety and nervous tension. From an early age, books were central in Weber's life. He read whatever he could get his hands on, including Kant, Machiavelli, Spinoza, Goethe, and Schopenhauer, and he wrote two historical essays before his 14th birthday.

In 1882, at 18 years old, Weber took his final high school examinations. Weber went to the University of Heidelberg for three semesters and then completed one year of military service in Strasbourg. When his service ended, he enrolled at the University of Berlin and, for the next eight years, lived at his parents' home. Upon passing his first examination in law in 1886, Weber began work as a full-time legal apprentice. While working as a junior barrister, he earned a PhD in economic and legal history in 1889. He then took a position as lecturer at the University of Berlin. Weber followed in his father's footsteps by becoming a lawyer and joining the same organizations that his father had at the University of Heidelberg. Like his father, he was active in government affairs as well.

In 1893, at the age of 29, Weber married Marianne Schnitger, a distant cousin, and finally left his childhood home. Today, Marianne Weber is recognized as an important feminist, intellectual, and sociologist in her own right. She was a popular public speaker on social and sexual ethics and wrote many books

and articles. Her most influential works, *Marriage and Motherhood in the Development of Law* (1907) and *Women and Love* (1935), examined feminist issues and the reform of marriage. However, Marianne is known best as the intellectual partner of her husband. She and Max made a conscious effort to establish an egalitarian relationship, and they worked together on intellectual projects. Interestingly, Marianne referred to Max as her "companion" and implied that theirs was an unconsummated marriage. Despite her own intellectual accomplishments, Marianne's 700-page treatise, *Max Weber: A Biography,* first published in 1926, has received the most attention, serving as the central source of biographical information on her husband.

In 1894, Max Weber joined the faculty at Freiburg University as a full professor of economics. Shortly thereafter, in 1896, Weber accepted a position as chair of economics at the University of Heidelberg, where he first began his academic career. In 1904, Weber traveled to the United States and began to formulate the argument of what would be his most celebrated work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber 1904–5/1958). After returning to Europe, Weber resumed his intellectual activity. He met with the brilliant thinkers of his day, including Werner Sombart, Paul Hensel, Ferdinand Tönnies, Ernst Troeltsch, and Georg Simmel.

He helped establish the Heidelberg Academy of the Sciences in 1909 and the Sociological Society in 1910 (Marianne Weber 1926/1975:425). However, Weber was still plagued by compulsive anxiety. In 1918, he helped draft the constitution of the Weimar Republic while giving his first university lectures in 19 years at the University of Vienna. He suffered tremendously, however, and turned down an offer for a permanent post (Weber 1958:23). In 1920, at the age of 56, Max Weber died of pneumonia.

3. Verstehen, Social Action, and Ideal Type

In this part we will discuss about three central ideas that defined Weber's work in the discipline of sociology. In the first part on Max Weber we will deal with three concepts such as Verstehen, Social Action and Ideal Type. These three concepts focus on Max Weber's concern with methodology of social sciences. These three concepts give a perspective and a background to analyse the major theoretical formulations and empirical context developed by Max Weber. So, a clear understanding of these ideas is necessary in dealing with Weber's substantive and theoretical ideas. Weber was opposed to pure abstract theorizing. Instead, his theoretical ideas are embedded in his empirical, usually historical, research. Weber's methodology shaped his research, and the combination of the two lies at the base of his theoretical orientation.

3.1 Verstehen

Verstehen is a German word usually translated as ''understanding,'' the concept of verstehen has become part of a critique of positivist approaches to the social sciences. Associated with the sociology of Max Weber, verstehen derives from the hermeneutic critique of positivism that emerged in German universities in the 1880s and 1890s that gave rise to a dispute over method in the social sciences. Weber felt that sociologists had an advantage over natural scientists. That advantage resided in the sociologist's ability to *understand* social phenomena, whereas the natural scientist could not gain a similar understanding of the behavior of an atom or a chemical compound. Weber's special use of the term *verstehen* in his historical research is one of his best-known and most controversial contributions to the methodology of contemporary sociology.

Verstehen refers to understanding the meaning of action from the actor's point of view. It is entering into the shoes of the other, and adopting this research stance requires treating the actor as a subject, rather than an object of one's observations. It also implies that unlike objects in the natural world, human actors are not simply the product of causal forces. Individuals are seen to create the world by organizing their own understanding of it and giving it meaning.

Weber defined sociology as "a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects" (Weber 1947:88). In casting "interpretive understanding," or *Verstehen*, as the principal objective, Weber's vision of sociology offers a distinctive counter to those who sought to base the young discipline on the effort to uncover universal laws applicable to all societies. Weber's view of the task of sociology combines his emphasis on *Verstehen* (interpretive understanding) with his view of social action: for Weber the task of the sociologist is to *understand* the meanings individuals assign to the contexts in which they are acting and to determine the *effects* that such meanings have on their conduct and the world.

One of the most systematic uses of this method by Weber is in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism where he supplements structural and economic accounts of the origin of capitalism in Europe with empathetic reconstruction of the worldview of verstehen seventeenth century Calvinist and other Protestant groups. He argues that Calvinist belief in predestination, which precluded achieving salvation through good works, provoked ''an unprecedented inner loneliness'' and search for signs of salvation. Through attempting to resolve this paradox the theological quest for evidence of divine grace was transposed into the worldly but ascetic pursuit of capital

accumulation, success in which was interpreted by Calvinists as signaling divine selection.

What above example illustrates is that only through empathetic reconstruction of actors' meanings is it possible to explain critical events like the growth of capitalism. At the same time Weber categorically rejected the idea that *verstehen* involved simply intuition, sympathetic participation, or empathy. To him, *verstehen* involved doing systematic and rigorous research rather than simply getting a "feeling" for a text or social phenomenon. In other words, for Weber, *verstehen* was a rational procedure of study.

In his methodology, Weber emphasizes understanding of the subjective meanings of the actions to the actors by contextualizing it in some way. It is important to note that when Weber talks about meaning in this context, he has in mind the motivations of the actor. These motives may be intellectual in the sense that the actor has an observable and rational motive for his or her actions in terms of means and ends; or they may be emotional in the sense that the behavior may be understood in terms of being motivated by some underlying feeling like anger.

3.2 Social Action

According to Max Weber, "Sociology is a science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its cause and effects". He differentiated between action and purely reactive behavior. The concept of behavior is reserved, then as now, for automatic behavior that involves no thought processes. A stimulus is presented and behavior occurs, with little intervening between stimulus and response. Such behavior was not of interest in Weber's sociology. He was concerned with action that clearly

involved the intervention of thought processes (and the resulting meaningful action) between the occurrence of a stimulus and the ultimate response. In another word, action was said to occur when individuals attached subjective meanings to their action. To Weber, the task of sociological analysis involved "the interpretation of action in terms of its subjective meaning" (Weber, 1921/1978). Here we can point out the following important elements of social action

- Social action includes all human behaviour.
- Social action attaches a subjective meaning to it.
- The acting individual or individuals take into account the behavior of others.
- Social action is oriented in its course.

Hence the construction of a pure type of social action helps the sociologists as an ideal type "which has the merit of clear understandability and lack of ambiguity'" (Weber 1964).Weber has talked about four types of social actions. These are

i) Zweckrational or rational action with reference to goals,

ii) Wertrational or rational action with reference to values,

iii) traditional action and

iv) affective action.

These are classified according to their modes of orientation. Rational action with reference to goals is classified in terms of the conditions or means for the successful attainment of the actor's

own rationally chosen ends. Rational action with reference to value is classified in terms of rational orientation to an absolute value, that is, action which is directed to overriding ideals of duty, honour or devotion to a cause.

Traditional action type is classified as one which is under the influence of long practice, customs and habits. Affective action is classified in terms of affectual orientation, especially emotional, determined by the specific states of feeling of the actor. Since reality presents a mixture of the four pure types of action, for our analysis and understanding we separate them analytically into pure or ideal types. For instance, the use of rational ideal types can help in measuring irrational deviation and we can understand particular empirical action by interpreting as to which of the four types of action it most closely approximates.

3.3 Ideal Type

Ideal type is another methodological and conceptual innovation of Weber. This methodological contribution helped Weber to get a wide recognizion in contemporary sociology. An ideal type is an analytical or conceptual construct that highlights certain specific features of people's orientations and actions for purposes of analysis and comparison. According to Weber ideal type is a mental construct, like a model, for the scrutiny and systematic characterisation of a concrete situation. Indeed, he used ideal type as a methodological tool to understand and analyse social reality.

"The ideal typical concept will develop our skill in imputation in research. It is not a description of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description". In other words, ideal types are concepts formulated on the basis of facts collected carefully and analytically for empirical research. In this sense, ideal types are constructs or concepts

which are used as methodological devices or tools in our understanding and analysis of any social problem.

Weber believed it was the responsibility of sociologists to develop conceptual tools, which could be used later by historians and sociologists. The most important such conceptual tool was the ideal type. Between 1903 and 1908 Weber published several so called ‘‘methodological’’ essays in which he addressed a wide range of questions concerning the goals, subject matter, and methods of the social sciences. The most famous of these essays was ‘‘‘Objectivity’ in Social Science and Social Policy,’’ published in 1904 as Weber was assuming the co editorship of the influential journal. He sketched his vision of the social sciences as grounded in cognitive interests that are in part historical and in part theoretical, and as seeking relevance to questions of value and contemporary social policy. Weber’s extended discussion of concept formation focused on his notion of ‘‘ideal type’’ concepts.

Ideal types are conceptual instruments that seek to represent the most relevant aspects of a given object (e.g., ‘‘city,’’ ‘‘patriarchy,’’ ‘‘capitalism’’) for purposes of social scientific inquiry. They are formed as deliberate constructs through a process of selection, abstraction, and idealization. Ideal type concepts aim to be useful rather than descriptive, for they are not intended to represent actual phenomena. Weber maintained that they were in fact indispensable for purposes of inquiry and clear exposition. Moreover, ideal types are well suited to a vision of social science concerned with representing the cultural significance and value oriented aspects of social phenomena within the context of historically oriented causal inquiries.

For example, Weber distinguished four “ideal types” of social action, reflecting differences in underlying subjective

orientations. These include two types of rational action (instrumental versus value-oriented rationality) and two types of non-rationalaction (traditional and affective). Instrumental rationality involves conscious deliberation and explicit choice with regard to both ends and means; that is, a choice is consciously made from among alternative ends (or goals) and then the appropriate means are selected to achieve the end that has been chosen.

Value- oriented rationality, in contrast, involves a subjective commitment to an end or goal that is not compared to alternative ends but instead is regarded as ultimate. For such actions the individual's rational choices are limited to selecting the appropriate means. In contrast to these types of rational action involving conscious deliberation and choice, traditional action is followed simply because it is consistent with well-established patterns or is habitual. Affective action expresses feelings or emotions (or affect) without conscious deliberation. All four of these are ideal types, of course; in real life, individuals' actions may reflect varying mixtures.

According to Weber conceived them, ideal types were hypothetical and a reference not to something that is normatively ideal but to an ideational type, which serves as a mental model that can be widely shared and used because analysts agree that it captures some essential features of a phenomenon. The ideal type does not correspond to reality but seeks to condense essential features of it in the model so that one can better recognize its real characteristics when it is met. It is not an embodiment of one side or aspect but the synthetic ideational representation of complex phenomena from reality.

For instance, Weber's analysis took emergent terms and ideas that were current in actual bureaucracies at the time that he

was writing and used them as the basis for theoretical construction of an ideal type of bureaucracy. They were a reconstruction of ordinary language in use into the ideal type. Now a certain normative slippage occurs in this process, because he is using ordinary language terms, as defined by members of organizations, to describe what it is that these members do. The members were those of the Prussian and German bureaucracies of the state and military. They were bounded by a ferociously strong sense of duty and conformance. From the conceptual and empirical usages scholars identified some important characteristics of ideal types. They are,

- Ideal types are not general or average types. That is, they are not defined by the characteristics common to all phenomena or objects of study. They are formulated on the basis of certain typical traits, which are essential to the construction of an ideal type concept.

- Ideal types are not a presentation of total reality or they do not explain everything. They exhibit partial conception of the whole.

- Ideal types are neither a description of any definite concept of reality, nor a hypothesis, but they can aid both in description and explanation. Ideal types are different in scope and usage from descriptive concepts.

- In this sense we can say that ideal types are also related to the analytic conception of causality, though not, in deterministic terms.

- They also help in reaching to general propositions and in comparative analysis.

- Ideal types serve to guide empirical research, and are used in systematisation of data on historical and social reality.

Weber used ideal types in three distinctive ways. Indeed, his three kinds of ideal types are distinguished by three levels of abstraction. The first kind of ideal types are rooted in the historical particularities namely, Western city, the Protestant ethics etc. In reality, this kind of ideal types refer to the phenomena that appear only in the specific historical periods and in particular cultural areas. The second kind relates to the abstract elements of social reality, for example, the concepts of bureaucracy or feudalism. These elements of social reality are found in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. The third kind of ideal type relates to the reconstruction of a particular kind of behaviour (Coser 1977). In another word,Weber offered several varieties of ideal types:

1. *Historical ideal types.* These relate to phenomena found in some particular historical epoch (e.g., the modern capitalistic marketplace).

2. *General sociological ideal types.* These relate to phenomena that cut across a number of historical periods and societies (e.g., bureaucracy).

3. *Action ideal types.* These are pure types of action based on the motivations of the actor (e.g., affectual action).

4. *Structural ideal types.* These are forms taken by the causes and consequences of social action (e.g., traditional domination).

To sum up, according to Weber an ideal-type is *not*. First, as a logical construct the ideal type does not *describe* empirical reality. Rather, it clarifies our conceptual understanding of what to look for in empirical data. Second, the ideal-type does not directly provide a *hypothesis* about reality. As a regulative principle it indirectly helps social scientists to construct research questions and hypotheses about social reality. Third, as a one-sided exaggeration the ideal-type does not provide an account of some '*average*' level of social reality.

4. Theory of Power and Authority, Bureaucracy

4.1 Power

For Max Weber, power is an aspect of social relationships. It refers to the possibility of imposing one's will upon the behaviour of another person. Power is present in social interaction and creates situations of inequality since the one who has power imposes it on others. The impact of power varies from situation to situation. On the one hand, it depends on the capacity of the powerful individual to exercise power. On the other hand it depends upon the extent to which it is opposed or resisted by the others. Weber says that power can be exercised in all walks of life. It is not restricted to a battlefield or to politics. It is to be observed in the market place, on a lecture platform, at a social gathering, in sports, scientific discussions and even through charity. Weber discusses two contrasting sources of power. These are as follows:

1. Power which is derived from a constellation of interests that develop in a formally free market. For example, a group of producers of sugar controls supply of their production in the market to maximise their profit.

2. An established system of authority that allocates the right to command and the duty to obey. For example, in the army, a jawan is obliged to obey the command of his officer. The officer derives his power through an established system of authority.

As you have seen in the last point, any discussion of power leads us to think about its legitimacy. It is legitimacy, which according to Weber constitutes the core point of authority. Let us now examine the concept of authority.

4. 2 Authority

Authority is another important concept developed by Weber. Weber used the German word "Herrschaft", to expline dominance or authorities exercised in society. Different scholars translated this word in different ways such as 'authority', others as 'domination' or 'command'. Herrschaft is a situation in which a 'Herr' or master dominates or commands others. Raymond Aron (1967) defines Herrschaft as the master's ability to obtain the obedience of those who theoretically owe it to him. As we saw, power refers to the ability or capacity to control another. Authority refers to legitimised power. It means that the master has the right to command and can expect to be obeyed. For a system of authority to exist the following elements must be present:

1. An individual ruler/master or a group of rulers/masters.

2. An individual/group that is ruled.

3. The will of the ruler to influence the conduct of the ruled which may be expressed through commands.

4. Evidence of the influence of the rulers in terms of compliance or obedience shown by the ruled.

5. Direct or indirect evidence which shows that the ruled have internalised and accepted the fact that the ruler's commands must be obeyed.

We see that authority implies a reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers believe that they have the legitimate right to exercise their authority. On the other hand, the ruled accept this power and comply with it, reinforcing its legitimacy. According to Weber, there are three systems of legitimation, each with its corresponding norms, which justify the power to command. It is these systems of legitimation which are designated as the following types of authority.

1. Traditional authority

2. Charismatic authority

3. Rational-legal authority

Traditional Authority: This system of legitimation flows from traditional action. In other words, it is based on customary law and the sanctity of ancient traditions. It is based on the belief that a certain authority is to be respected because it has existed since time immemorial.In traditional authority, rulers enjoy personal authority by virtue of their inherited status. Their commands are in accordance with customs and they also possess the right to extract compliance from the ruled. Often, they abuse their power. The persons who obey them are 'subjects' in the fullest sense of the term. They obey their master out of personal loyalty or a pious regard for his time-honored status.

Briefly, traditional authority derives its legitimacy from longstanding traditions, which enable some to command and compel others to obey. It is hereditary authority and does not require written rules. The 'masters' exercise their authority with the help of loyal relatives and friends. Weber considers this kind of authority as irrational. It is therefore rarely found in modern developed societies.

Charismatic Authority: Charisma means an extraordinary quality possessed by some individuals. This gives such people unique powers to capture the fancy and devotion of ordinary people. Charismatic authority is based on extraordinary devotion to an individual and to the way of life preached by this person. The legitimacy of such authority rests upon the belief in the supernatural or magical powers of the person. The charismatic leader 'proves' his/her power through miracles, military and other victories or the dramatic prosperity of the disciples. As long as charismatic leaders continue to 'prove' their miraculous powers in the eyes of their disciples, their authority stays intact. You may have realised that the type of social action that charismatic authority is related to is affective action. The disciples are in a highly charged emotional state as a result of the teachings and appeal of the charismatic leaders. They worship their hero.

Rational-legal Authority: The term refers to a system of authority, which are both, rational and legal. It is vested in a regular administrative staff who operate in accordance with certain written rules and laws. Those who exercise authority are appointed to do soon the basis of their achieved qualifications, which are prescribed and codified. Those in authority consider it a profession and are paid a salary. Thus, it is a rational system. It is legal because it is in accordance with the laws of the land which people recognise and feel obliged to obey. The people acknowledge and respect the legality of both, the ordinance and

rules as well as the positions or titles of those who implement the rules. Rational-legal authority is a typical feature of modern society. It is the reflection of the process of rationalisation. Remember that Weber considers rationalisation as the key feature of western civilisation. It is, according to Weber, a specific product of human thought and deliberation. By now you have clearly grasped the connection between rational-legal authority and rational action for obtaining goals.

4. Bureaucracy

According to Weber bureaucracy represents the pure ideal-type of legal-rational authority and it is a defining feature of modernity. Bureaucracy is organized on a hierarchical and rational basis. Individuals and departments are coordinated through explicit rules and procedures, records and files, functions and positions, a transparent line of command, and entry qualifications. It represents the most efficient exercise of power in conditions of complex and large-scale populations. In its most perfected form, bureaucracy organizes the permanent staff of the modern state.

He studied bureaucracy in detail and constructed an ideal type which contained the most prominent characteristics of bureaucracy. He identified six major characteristics of the ideal type bureaucracy:

1. Official duties and functions are performed by accredited staff.

2. Offices are structured into a hierarchy of command and supervision from higher authority to lower functions.

3. ‘The bureau’ or modern office is based on an accumulation of written documents and files, kept completely separate from private property.

4. Specialized office functions require personnel to acquire expert qualifications and training.

5. ‘The bureau’ demands that the official is fully dedicated to working conscientiously at full capacity.

6. General office rules are comprehensive, stable and must be learned as the special technical competence of the official.

According to Weber being a bureaucrat is a ‘vocation’. This involves a demanding set of prescribed duties and training and an unswerving, methodical and impersonal loyalty to ‘the office’ in return for ‘a secure existence’. Higher grades of officialdom demand ‘social esteem’ for their expertise in bureaucratic matters and qualifications. Unlike elected officials who are appointed or promoted ‘from below’, pure bureaucrats are appointed ‘from above’ by a superior authority. A legal right to ‘tenure for life’ allows them to discharge their duties free from personal interference and in strict accord with the rules. This independence is enhanced by a regular, albeit relatively modest, salary and pension. They also follow a fixed career structure that allows them to move up the hierarchy through examinations and qualifications.

Class, Status and Party

Weber’s concepts and contributions to stratification theory expanded and refined Marxian understandings of advanced industrial society. Like Marx, Weber believed that economic stratification produces social classes: ‘‘We may speak

of a class when (1) a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances, insofar as (2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and (3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labor markets.'' Weber defines class as a situation where:

1. a large number of men have in common a specific causal factor influencing their chances in life, insofar as

2. this factor has to do only with the possession of economic goods and the interests involved in earning a living, and furthermore

3. the conditions of the market in commodities or labour.

Class situation depends on the probability of individuals using skills and resources to acquire goods, a position and 'inner satisfaction' under 'pure' competitive market conditions. In turn this always depends on the prior ownership and non-ownership of property.

But Weber suggested that classes could form in any market situation, and he argued that other forms of social stratification could occur independently of economics.Weber's was a three dimensional model of stratification consisting of,

(1) social classes that are objectively formed social groupings having an economic base;

(2) parties which are associations that arise through actions oriented towardthe acquisition of social power;

(3) statusgroups delineated in terms of social estimationsof honor or esteem.

In Weberian terms a class is more than apopulation segment that shares a particular economic position relative to the means of production. Classes reflect ‘‘communities of interest’’ and social prestige as well as economic position. Class members share lifestyles, preferences, and outlooks as a consequence of socialization, educational credentials, and the prestige of occupational and other power positions they hold, which also serve to cloak the economic class interests that lie beneath. This status ideology eases the way for class members to monopolize and maintain the prestige, power, and financial gain of higher socioeconomic positions, as only persons who seem like ‘‘the right kind’’ are allowed into preferred positions(Collins 1985).

In contrast to class, status does normally refer to communities; status groups are ordinarily communities, albeit rather amorphous ones. “Status situation” is defined by Weber as “every typical component of the life of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of *honor*”. As a general rule, status is associated with a style of life. (Status relates to consumption of goods produced, whereas class relates to economic production.) Those at the top of the status hierarchy have a different lifestyle than do those at the bottom.

In this case, lifestyle, or status, is related to class situation. But class and status are not necessarily linked to one another: “Money and an entrepreneurial position are not in themselves status qualifications, although they may lead to them; and the lack of property is not in itself a status disqualification, although this may be a reason for it”. There is a complex set of relationships between class and status, and it is made even more complicated when we add the dimension of party.

While classes exist in the economic order and status groups in the social order, parties can be found in the political order. To Weber, parties "are always *structures* struggling for domination". Thus, parties are the most organized elements of Weber's stratification system. Weber thinks of parties very broadly as including not only those that exist in the state but also those that may exist in a social club. Parties usually, but not always, represent class or status groups. Whatever they represent, parties are oriented to the attainment of power.

3.3 Rationality and Modernity- Rationalisation

According to Weber, the contemporary world is characterized by rationality. Max Weber believed that the key to understand modern society is to be found in its rational features and rationalising forces. For him, the modern Western world is characterised by rationality. As a result of this, human activity is marked by methodical calculation. Quantification, predictability and regularity become important. Individuals rely more on logic, reasonand calculation than on supernatural beliefs.

Weber argues that one of the prime forces bringing about modernity is the process of rationalization. He uses the word rationalization in at least three different ways: He uses it to talk about means-ends calculation, in which rationality is individual and specific. Rational action is action based on the most efficient means to achieve a given end. Secondly, Weber uses the term to talk about bureaucracies. The bureaucratic form is a method of organizing human behavior across time and space. Initially we used kinship to organize our behaviors, using the ideas of extended family, lineages, clans, moieties, and so forth. But as the contours of society changed, so did our method of organizing. Bureaucracy is a more rational form of organization than the traditional and emotive kinship system.

Finally, Weber uses the term rationalization in a more general sense. One way to think about it is to see rationalization as the opposite of enchantment. Specifically, an enchanted world is one filled with mystery and magic. Disenchantment, then, refers to the process of emptying the world of magical or spiritual forces. Part of this, of course, is in the religious sense of secularization. Peter Berger (1967) provides us with a good definition of secularization: "By secularization we mean the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols" (p. 107).

Thus, both secularization and disenchantment refer to the narrowing of the religious or spiritual elements of the world. If we think about the world of magic or primitive religion, one filled with multiple layers of energies, spirits, demons, and gods, then in a very real way the world has been subjected to secularization from the beginning of religion. The number of spiritual entities has steadily declined from many, many gods to one; and the presence of a god has been removed from immediately available within every force (think of the gods of thunder, harvest, and so on) to completely divorced from the physical world, existing apart from time (eternal) and space (infinite). In our more recent past, secularization, and demystification and rationalization, have of course been carried further by science and capitalism.

This general process of rationalization and demystification extends beyond the realm of religion. Because of the prominence of bureaucracy, means-ends calculation, science, secularization, and so forth, our world is emptier. Weber sees this move toward rationalization as historically unavoidable; it is above all else the defining feature of modernity. Yet it leads inexorably to an empty society. The organizational, intellectual, and cultural movements toward rationality have emptied the world of emotion, mystery, tradition, and affective human ties.

We increasingly relate to our world through economic calculation, impersonal relations, and expert knowledge. Weber (1948) tells us that as a result of rationalization the "most sublime values have retreated from public life" and that the spirit "which in former times swept through the great communities like a firebrand, welding them together" is gone (p. 155). Weber sees this not only as a condition of the religious or political institutions in society; he also sees the creative arts, like music and painting, as having lost their creative spirit as well.

In Weber's work we can identify different types of rationalities. The first type is *practical rationality,* which is defined by Kalberg as “every way of life that views and judges worldly activity in relation to the individual’s purely pragmatic and egoistic interests” (1980:1151). People who practice practical rationality accept given realities and merely calculate the most expedient ways of dealing with the difficulties that they present. This type of rationality arose with the severing of the bonds of primitive magic, and it exists trans-civilization ally and trans-historically; that is, it is not restricted to the modern Occident. This type of rationality stands in opposition to anything that threatens to transcend everyday routine. It leads people to distrust all impractical values, either religious or secular-utopian, as well as the theoretical rationality of the intellectuals, the type of rationality to which we now turn.

Theoretical rationality involves a cognitive effort to master reality through increasingly abstract concepts rather than through action. It involves such abstract cognitive processes as logical deduction, induction, attribution of causality, and the like. This type of rationality was accomplished early in history by sorcerers and ritualistic priests and later by philosophers, judges, and scientists. Unlike practical rationality, theoretical rationality leads the actor to transcend daily realities in a quest to understand

the world as a meaningful cosmos. Like practical rationality, it is trans-civilizational and trans-historical.

The effect of intellectual rationality on actionis limited. In that it involves cognitive processes, it need not affect action taken, and it has the potential to introduce new patterns of action only indirectly. *Substantive rationality* (similar to practical rationality but unlike theoretical rationality) directly orders action into patterns through clusters of values. Substantive rationality involves a choice of means to ends within the context of a system of values. One value system is no more (substantively) rational than another. Thus, this type of rationality also exists trans-civilizationally and trans-historically, wherever consistent value postulates exist.

Finally, and most important from Kalberg's point of view, is *formal rationality*, which involves means–ends calculation (Cockerham, Abel, and Luschen, 1993). But whereas in practical rationality this calculation occurs in reference to pragmatic self-interests, in formal rationality it occurs with reference to "universally applied rules, laws, and regulations." As Brubaker puts it, "Common to the rationality of industrial capitalism, formalistic law and bureaucratic administration is its objectified, institutionalized, supra-individual form; in each sphere, rationality is embodied in the social structure and confronts individuals as something external to them" (1984:9). Weber makes this quite clear in the specific case of bureaucratic rationalization: Bureaucratic rationalization … revolutionizes with *technical means*, in principle, as does every economic reorganization, "from without": It *first* changes the material and social orders, and *through* them the people, by changing the conditions of adaptation, and perhaps the opportunities for adaptation, through a rational determination of means and ends.(Weber, 1921/1978:1116)

Although all the other types of rationality are trans-civilizational and epoch-transcending, formal rationality arose only in the West with the coming of industrialization. The universally applied rules, laws, and regulations that characterize formal rationality in the West are found particularly in the economic, legal, and scientific institutions, as well as in the bureaucratic form of domination. Thus, we have already encountered formal rationality in our discussion of rational-legal authority and the bureaucracy.

3.4 The Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism

First let us look at the importance of *The Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism* and the context in which Weber wrote it. He wrote *The Protestant Ethic* at a pivotal period of his intellectual career, shortly after his recovery from a depressive illness that had incapacitated him from serious academic work for a period of some four years. Prior to his sickness, most of Weber's works, although definitely presaging the themes developed in the later phase of his life, were technical researches in economic history, economics and jurisprudence. They include studies of mediaeval trading law (his doctoral dissertation), the development of Roman land-tenure, and the contemporary socioeconomic conditions of rural workers in the eastern part of Germany.

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism is probably Weber's best-known work. It is a clear example of his methodology. In it, he describes an ideal type of spirit of capitalism, he performs an historical-comparative analysis to determine how and when that kind of capitalism came to exist, and he uses the concept of verstehen to understand the subjective orientation and motivation of the actors.

Weber had three interrelated reasons for writing the book. First, he wanted to counter Marx's argument concerning the rise of capitalism—Weber characterizes Marx's historical materialism as "naive." The second reason is very closely linked to the first: Weber wanted to argue against brute structural force and argue for the effect that cultural values could have on social action. The third reason that Weber wrote The Protestant Ethic was to explain why rational capitalism had risen in the West and nowhere else. Capitalism had been practiced previously. But it was traditional, not rational capitalism.

In traditional capitalism, traditional values and status positions still held; the elite would invest but would spend as little time and effort doing so in order to live as they were "accustomed to live." In other words, the elite invested in capitalistic ventures in order to maintain their lifestyle. It was, in fact, the existence of traditional values and status positions that prevented the rise of rational capitalism in some places. Rational capitalism, on the other hand, is practiced to increase wealth for its own sake and is based on utilitarian social relations.

These writings took their inspiration in some substantial part from the so-called ‘historical school’ of economics which, in conscious divergence from British political economy, stressed the need to examine economic life within the context of the historical development of culture as a whole. Weber always remained indebted to this standpoint. But the series of works hebegan on his return to health, and which preoccupied him for the remainder of his career, concern a range of problems much broader in compass than those covered in the earlier period. *The Protestant Ethic* was a first fruit of these new endeavours. An appreciation of what Weber sought to achieve in the book demands at least an elementary grasp of two aspects of the circumstances in which it was produced: the intellectual climate within which he wrote, and

the connections between the work itself and the massive programme of study that he set himself in the second phase of his career.

In this earliest stage of his research Weber was interested in ascertaining the contribution made by a set of religious beliefs and practices to the development of the specific form of modern (‘‘rational’’) capitalism as found in Western Europe and the US. What marked this modern form of capitalism as new was especially the emphasis on the systematic organization of work done by laborers hired on a formally free market, and enterprises devoted to the pursuit of increasing profit without the constraints of traditionalism. Here as elsewhere in his work

Weber recognized that there had been other prior forms of capitalism in Europe as well as non western capitalistic forms and practices. Likewise, he acknowledged that the rise of capitalism as a specific economic system in modern Europe had many causes, both material and cultural. His central problem here was, first and primarily, to explain the rise, not of capitalism as a system, but of the peculiar ‘‘spirit’’ (ethos, mentality) of this new economic system, and second, to show how this new ethos made specific contributions to the intensive growth of modern capitalism in its most crucial stages, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hence, the problems he addressed were complex, yet circumscribed, as were his hypotheses, lines of argument, interpretations of evidence, and conclusions. This is not to say that his arguments were free of ambiguities, nor that the evidence he marshaled was completely convincing.

What was the new ‘‘spirit’’ of capitalism that Weber took as the object of his inquiry? He described it as an ethic, albeit a secular one, lacking immediate religious foundation or reference, yet prescribing as a moral duty the pursuit of earning more and

more money as an end in itself. Whether as an entrepreneur, independent craftsman, or laborer, an individual is obliged to make the acquisition of money from their occupation the center of their life.

At the same time, the individual is also duty bound not to pursue wealth in order to spend money for the enjoyment of luxury or leisure. The acquisition of wealth is its own reward. Waste of time or money is admonished; frugality, reinvestment, and credit worthiness are virtues. Although the historical origins of this distinctly modern frame of mind are unclear, Weber believed that this new positive moral outlook on the acquisition of money had emerged in America and Western Europe by the eighteenth century. One of the surprising claims is that Weber's spirit of capitalism grew and flourished largely independently of the system of capitalism itself.

Weber acknowledges that Benjamin Franklin, though a great exemplar of the new spirit, did not fit the model of the modern capitalist, nor was capitalism very advanced in its development in Franklin's America. This fact of the independent origin of the capitalist spirit, however, served Weber's view that it was not an ideology springing from the economic system that was its rationale, as Marxism might have posited. However, if the modern spirit of capitalism was not a product of the form or system of capitalism, the question becomes all the more urgent: Whatwere the sources of this new attitude toward the acquisition of wealth, an attitude that became, as Weber put it, a leading principle of capitalism?

In his search for the historical origins of capitalism's modern spirit, Weber took as his point of departure the contemporary controversies over the respective orientations of Roman Catholics and Protestants toward capitalistic economic

activities. In this context it had been noted as a matter of empirical fact that Protestants were more likely than Catholics to be involved in the more innovative and technically skilled types of capitalistic activity and at the same time were more likely to pursue the patterns of training and education appropriate for such work. Likewise, they tended to be more prosperous than their more tradition bound Catholic counterparts. The attempts to explain these differences were the stuff of wide rangingif unproductive controversies at the time Weber himself began to take up the questions.

As Weber probed the possible sources of the differences he found them to lie in the early history of Protestantism. First, Luther and Lutheranism made key contributions, particularly in advancing the idea that worldly economic activities in pursuit of a livelihood were worthy ‘‘vocations,’’ thereby providing enterprise and work with moral sanction. This, Weber reasoned, provided the impetus for individuals to devote themselves to worldly economic activity to a greater extent than in circumstances where tradition had dictated that work was either morally neutral or even evil, albeit necessary for economic sustenance.

Second, Calvin and Calvinism provided additional, crucial incentives to work unstintingly in one’s economic vocation. Here, Weber’s line of argument about the connections between religious beliefs and economic activities becomes intricate and turn son the paradox of unintended consequences.

Weber’s central problem was to explain why capitalism first arose in the West and not in other parts of the world. Core features of capitalism, ‘the impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money’, had been around for a long time and in many places. ‘Unlimited greed’

cannot be the defining feature. In fact the opposite may be the case: 'Capitalism *may* even be identical with the restraint, or at least a rational tempering, of this irrational impulse' (1930: 17).

Something else lay behind the 'peculiar rationalism of Western culture'. 'Capitalism', according to Weber, existed in other societies like China, India, Babylon, in the classical world and in the Middle Ages. But in each case the road to economic rationalism was barred. By what? 'Magical and religious forces' obstructed the development of rational capitalism according to Weber. They lacked a guiding idea, an 'ethos' or a 'spirit' favourable to rational capitalism. Crucially, only in the West did 'the rational capitalist organization of (formally) free labour' appear (1930: 21). Free labour is decisive for Weber: 'Exact calculation – the basis of everything else – is only possible on a basis of free labour' (1930: 22).

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