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# BASOC201 CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHTS-I



**BA (SOCIOLOGY)**

**3<sup>RD</sup> SEMESTER**

**Rajiv Gandhi University**

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# CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT

**BA SOC 201**  
**Third Semester**  
**PART-I**



**RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY**  
Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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E-28, Sector-8, Noida - 201301 (UP)  
Phone: 0120-4078900 • Fax: 0120-4078999

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## About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

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# SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

## Classical Sociological Thought

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<b>UNIT 2</b> <b>Comte:</b> Positivism; Law of Three Stages and Hierarchy of Science	<b>Unit 2: Auguste Comte</b> <b>(Pages 21-29)</b>
<b>UNIT 3</b> <b>Spencer:</b> Social Darwinism; Evolution; and Classification of Society	<b>Unit 3: Herbert Spencer</b> <b>(Pages 31-38)</b>
<b>UNIT 4</b> <b>Durkheim:</b> Mechanical and Organic Solidarity; Social Fact; Theory of Suicide and Sociology of Religion	<b>Unit 4: Emile Durkheim</b> <b>(Pages 39-61)</b>

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# INTRODUCTION

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In sociology, sociological perspectives, theories or paradigms are complex, theoretical and methodological frameworks used to analyse and explain the objects of social study. They facilitate organizing sociological knowledge. Sociological theory is constantly evolving, and can never be presumed to be complete. New sociological theories build upon the work of their predecessors and add to them, but classical sociological theories are still considered important and relevant.

Whereas the field of sociology itself and sociological theory by extension is relatively new, dating to 18th and 19th centuries, it is closely tied to a much older field of social sciences (and social theory) in general. Sociology has separated itself from the other social sciences with its focus on society, a concept that goes beyond nation, and includes communities, organizations and relationships. Sociological theory is not just a collection of answers to queries about the nature and essence of society. Not only does it provide many answers, it also offers help in putting better questions and further developing research projects that can help understand complex social phenomena.

Like any other subject of science, it is always under development in response to the changing dynamics of our social lives as well as the increase in sociological knowledge. The adventure of sociological theory is comparatively new—spanning just about two centuries. However, it is very closely connected to a long history of social thought dating back to Greek philosophers, Roman lawyers, and Jewish and Christian religious scholars. This period can be termed as the prehistory of sociological theory. Their systematic way of thinking about society laid a foundation for the sociological thought capable of understanding and expressing the emerging complexities in society.

The learning material in the book is presented in a structured format so that it is easy to grasp. Each unit begins with an outline of the *Unit Objectives* followed by *Introduction* to the topic of the unit. The detailed content is then presented in simple language, interspersed with *Check Your Progress* questions to enable the student to test his understanding as and when he goes through each unit. *Summary* provided at the end of each unit helps in quick recollection. *Questions and Exercises* section is also provided for further practice.

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# UNIT 1 EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

## Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Role of French Revolution and Industrial Revolution
  - 1.2.1 Impact of French Revolution on the Emergence of Sociology
  - 1.2.2 Impact of Industrial Revolution on the Emergence of Sociology
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- 1.4 Intellectual Background for the Emergence of Sociology in the Western World
  - 1.4.1 The Works of Intellectual Philosophers in Sociology
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sociology is the study of human social relationships and institutions. As an academic discipline, sociology is the study of the social behaviour including its origin, development and organization. Sociology basically deals with developing a body of knowledge about social order, disorder and social change. Sociology involves the study of diverse matters like crime, religion, family, state, racial divisions and cultures.

The aim of sociology is to understand how human action is affected by the surrounding social and cultural structures. At a personal level, sociology deals with love, gender identity, family conflict, ageing, religious faith and even human behaviour. At the state level, sociology deals with crime, law, social discrimination, poverty, wealth, education and social movements. At the global level, sociology studies war, peace, migration, population growth and even economic development.

## 1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Analyse the role of French revaluation of Industrial Revolution
- Discuss the impact of French Revolution on emergence of sociology
- Explain the nature and scope of sociology
- Describe the impact of Industrial Revolution on emergence of sociology
- Analyse enlightenment as a major contributing factor to the development of sociology in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries



## 1.2 ROLE OF FRENCH REVOLUTION AND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

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Sociology as a field of study emerged in Europe in the early nineteenth century. The main subjects and tenets of sociology were based on the changes that were taking place in the European society and politics. The European society was changing because of revolution, reforms, warfare, industrialization and urbanization. The three major contributing factors to the emergence of sociology include French Revolution, Industrial Revolution and a period known as Enlightenment in the western world.

### 1.2.1 Impact of French Revolution on the Emergence of Sociology

The French revolution lasted for a period of ten years. The French Revolution is known to be the first modern and ideological revolution of that period. It had a great impact on the society because it changed the entire structure of the society. One of the main changes that French Revolution brought about was the elimination of social distinction between people and the feudal lords. The power for the first time shifted into the hands of people from the Church and the people were considered the citizens of the society. European society that had been running on the system of clerical hierarchy became free from the hierarchical structure and the rights and property was given to the citizens. French Revolution also gave birth to Civil Marriage and Divorce. The Revolution also brought about significant changes in the family because of the Declaration of Human Rights which stated that all humans are born free and equal. Several changes were brought about in family related issues, education as well as religion during the French revolution.

### 1.2.2 Impact of Industrial Revolution on the Emergence of Sociology

The late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century also saw Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution began in the late eighteenth century in England and brought about several changes in the society. In fact, Industrial Revolution shaped the society into what it is today. The revolution spread into Britain by the early nineteenth century and slowly spread across the entire world. At the end of the eighteenth century, the world population was rapidly increasing and the demand for products was growing. So, more workers were needed to meet the ever increasing demand. The work that people indulged in during this period was far different from the traditional work they were used to doing. Industrial revolution also brought about technological changes at the work place, introducing machines that improved the efficiency of the work force. Machines were being used by people to produce goods thus increasing time as well as production efficiency. Technological changes introduced the use of steel and iron. These changes also improved the transportation facilities and also facilitated and improved trade between countries. The Industrial Revolution led to an expansion of the markets and also ensured that goods and products were moved more freely and made easily available. With Industrial Revolution, machines became the symbol of the new society. Industrial revolution also improved communication. People could now communicate in a fast improved manner. Since letters were the only way of communication, methods were introduced to deliver them quickly and at the right place. A new method of communication called telegraph was also introduced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The changes in communication brought people and societies closer to each other. People now shifted to cities and markets began to emerge in cities.

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The socio-political changes that were brought about by the French and the Industrial Revolutions were not totally accepted by all. There were some who blamed French Revolution for having brought about social chaos and disorder. Similarly, many attributed child labor and fast pace of life to Industrial Revolution. Many even protested against these adverse effects of these revolutions and these signs of social protests and consciousness were what formed the roots of sociology.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What are the main contributing factors to the emergence of sociology?
2. How were changes brought into family relations by the French Revolution?
3. Why were machines used during and after Industrial Revolution?
4. Which method of communication was introduced during the Industrial Revolution?

## 1.3 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is a relatively new academic discipline among the social sciences, which include economics, political science, anthropology, history and psychology. The ideas behind it, however, have a long history and can trace their origins to a mixture of common human knowledge and philosophy.

Sociology emerged as a scientific discipline in the early nineteenth century, as a fundamentally new type of society based on new principles of social organization and new ideas of enlightenment. This led to a change in the mindset of people. Sociologists hoped not only to understand what held social groups together, but also to develop an antidote to the social breakdown. In terms of science, sociology pertains to social groups, their hierarchies or forms of organization. It combines functions which are inclined to maintain or modify these forms of organization and their inter-group network. Sociology is concerned with interaction itself. A social group is a system of social interaction. Sociology is interested in social relationships, not because they are economic, political, religious, legal or educational, but because they are social at the same time. Further, in sociology we do not study everything that happens in a society or under social conditions, but we study culture, social relationships, their specific forms, varieties and patterns. We study the combination of relations, how they build up smaller or greater systems and how they respond to changes and changing demands or needs.

Auguste Comte invented the term 'sociology' in the year 1838. He was a French philosopher and sociologist. Comte attempted to combine all the faculties of mankind, including history, psychology and economics. His own pattern of sociology was typical of the 19th century; he put across the theory that every man had experienced the same distinct historical stages and that the success of this progress was the solution to every social ill. Sociology would lead social sciences in future. Comte defined **sociology** as the science of social phenomena, subject to natural invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation. He advocated for sociology to be used as a positive method as in natural sciences. He further believed that social evolution went hand in hand with progress, in accordance with the law of three stages. These three stages are: the **theological**-military, the **metaphysical**-legalistic and the **positive**-industrial laws.

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According to Comte's hierarchy of sciences, sociology occupies the summit. This is because it is considered to be the most complex of sciences, as it deals with humanity.

The systematic study of society gained prominence due to the upheavals caused by the French and industrial revolutions. The intellectual community of that time attempted to analyse and establish reasons for these rapid changes. So the study of sociology emerged as a distinct discipline dealing with social order and change. Although all social sciences study different aspects of social life, but the approach of sociology is distinct. It is a more detailed picture explaining why things are the way they are. Sociology has also been labelled as a 'debunking science' because a sociologist is interested in looking beyond the commonly accepted meaning of social phenomenon and understands reality as a social construction; that is how reality gets established in the way we understand it. Peter Berger argued that 'sociology is a distinctive way of thinking, a particular awareness of the nature of social life, an unwillingness to accept the superficial and the apparently obvious'.

Emile Durkheim was a pioneer in demonstrating scientific methodology in sociology. In his most acclaimed work, *Rules of Sociological Method* (1897), he emphasized on the methodology that he has described in his study, *Suicide* (1897).

The discipline of sociology appeared in many universities in the 1890s. Urbanization and industrialization were posing several social issues and the sociologists of those times were trying hard to find a scientific solution. However, they did not succeed. It was their strong belief that sociology was the key to the scientific growth of the society. Later, sociology emerged as a branch of scientific knowledge with theories resulting from scientific inferences, rather than mere guesswork or comments that were based on impressions.

### Nature of Sociology

On a broader platform, sociology is the study of human interactions, their conditions and consequences. It is a type of science that comprises investigative techniques which are objective and systematic. It gives rise to the evolution of the social truth that is based on empirical evidence and interpretation. However, it cannot be directly based on natural sciences, since human behaviour is a unique phenomenon. It also differs from natural sciences such that the contents of natural sciences are constant while human behaviour exhibits variations and flexibility.

Sociology as a branch of knowledge has its own unique characteristics. It is different from other sciences in certain respects. An analysis of internal logical characteristics helps one to understand its main characteristics:

- **Sociology is an independent science:** It is not treated and studied as a branch of any other science. As an independent science, it has its own field of study, boundary and method.
- **Sociology is a social science and not a physical science:** As a social science it focuses its attention on man, his social behaviour, social activities and social life. It is related to other social sciences like history, political science, economics, etc.
- **Sociology is a categorical and not a normative discipline:** Sociology does not make any kind of value judgments. Its approach is neither moral nor immoral but amoral. It is ethically neutral. It makes no recommendations on matters of social policy or legislation or programme. Sociology cannot deal with problems of good and evil, right and wrong, moral and immoral.

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- **Sociology is a pure science and not an applied science:** The main aim of pure science is acquisition of knowledge, irrespective of whether the acquired knowledge is useful or can be put to use. On the other hand, applied science applies acquired knowledge into life.
- **Sociology is relatively abstract and not concrete science:** It is not interested in concrete manifestation of human events. It is more concerned with the form of human events and their patterns. For instance, sociology is not specifically concerned with wars and revolutions but in the general social phenomena, as types of social conflict.
- **Sociology is not based on particular subjects or individuals, but is a general science:** Sociology tries to find out general laws or principles about human interaction and associations about the nature, forms, content and structure of human groups and societies. It adopts a general approach on the basis of a study of some selected events.
- **Sociology is a rational and empirical science:** There are two broad ways of approach to scientific knowledge, one is empiricism and the other is rationalism. Empiricism emphasizes experiences and facts that result from observation and experiment. Rationalism stresses reason and theories that result from logical inference. In sociological inquiry, both are significant.

### Scope of Sociology

According to Morris Ginsberg, the scope of sociology includes a broad study of human interactions, their conditions and consequences. Some writers would restrict its scope to the relations arising out of acts of will, but this is an unjustifiable and unworkable limitation. Many interactions between individuals are not consciously determined or apprehended. One of the most interesting problems confronting the student of society is to determine the respective roles of reason or rational purpose and of impulse and the unconsciousness in social life.

In this case, sociology must be capable of dealing with the complete issue or network of social relationships. Since these relationships are assumed to be dependent on the nature of individuals; (i) to one another, (ii) to the community, (iii) to the external environment. This can be explained if every social event can be traced back to its origin, as influenced by complex interactions. A combination of these interactions is comprised within a community, with respect to external influences. But this ideal, if generously conceived, is clearly too ambitious. Sociology involves a systematic and objective study of human society. Sociologists study individuals' social actions. Social relationships, for instance, those between a husband and a wife, a teacher and a student, a buyer and a seller and social processes, namely, co-operation, competition, conflict and organizations, communities and nations and social structures (family, class and state), give rise to sociological queries. Explanations that are derived from norms and values result in the formation of social institutions. Thus, sociology can be defined as the study of social life. Sociology comprises a variety of apprehensions and interests. It is aimed at providing classified forms of relationships within societies, institutions and associations. These relationships pertain to economic, political, moral, religious and social aspects of human life. Though, so far no collective agreement has been reached on the essence of sociology, yet it is established that sociology deals with the study of interaction systems, which shape social institutions, the state and the non-native order. Therefore, in sociology we study about social organization, social structure, institutions and culture.

Sociology was defined differently by two schools of thought, pertaining to its range and theme:

### (i) Formal school

The formal school defined sociology as a social science that has definite characteristics. This school was advocated by George Simmel, Ferdinand Tonnies, Alfred Vierkandt and Leopold Von Wiese. On the other hand, the synthetic school with Durkheim, Hobhouse and Sorokin attempted to bring together a type of coordination among all social sciences.

The formal school supported the idea of giving sociology a suitable subject matter to make it a distinct discipline. It stressed on the study of forms of social relationships and considered sociology as independent. Simmel defined sociology as a specific social science that describes, organizes, analyses and visually explains the forms of social relationships. To put it in a different way, social interactions should be classified into various forms or types and analysed. Simmel argued that social interactions have various forms. He conducted researches on formal relationships like cooperation, competition, sub and super ordinate relationships, etc. He said, 'however diverse the interests are that give rise to these sociations, the forms in which the interests are realized may yet be identical.' His main emphasis was to conceptualize these forms from human relationships which are not affected by different scenarios. Vierkandt believed that sociology should pertain to people being extremely attached mentally or psychically. Von Wiese believed in the existence of two types of basic social processes in a human society. These are: (i) Associative processes that are related to contact, approach, adaptation, etc. (ii) Disassociate processes like competition and conflict.

Additionally, a blend of associative and disassociative processes also exists. Each of these processes can be further segregated into subclasses. These subclasses result in 650 categories of human relationships. Sociology should concentrate on discovering a basic force of change and consistency and should be influenced by the history of concrete societies. Tonnies suggested two types of societies, namely *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (association). These were based on the level of closeness between members of the society. Based on the types of relationships, he attempted to differ between community and society. Max Weber outlined a particular field for sociology. He recommended that the aim of sociology was to identify or explain social behaviour. But social behaviour does cover all aspects human relations, since all exchanges between human beings cannot be called social. Sociology deals with learning and identifying the different types of social relationships.

### Criticism of formal school

The formal school has come under criticism because it has focused only on abstract forms and ignored the more feasible parts of social life. It is not possible to study abstract forms that have been alienated from concrete relations. According to Ginsberg, the study of social relationships would never be complete if it is carried out in isolation, without a thorough knowledge of the terms that are associated with it. Sociology is not the only branch of social sciences that focuses on the types of social relationships. Political science and international law also study the same. Since it is not possible to study social sciences as a separate entity from other sciences, the concept of pure sociology is not practical.

### (ii) Synthetic school of sociology

The synthetic school defines sociology as a combination of social sciences.

It stresses on widening the range of sociology. Durkheim divided sociology into three main sections, these were, social morphology, social physiology and general sociology. Social morphology pertains to the lifestyle of people on the basis of their location or region. It comprises of factors like population, density, distribution, etc. One can further divide this into two categories, (i) analysis of density and type of population that influences social relationships and social groups and (ii) learning about social hierarchy or details related to the main categories of social groups and institutions, along with their operation. Social physiology deals with the origin and character of different social institutions, namely religion, morals, law, economic institutions, etc. The prime objective of general sociology is to frame general social laws. Efforts are still on to find out links between different types of institutions that are treated independently in social physiology and the possibilities of emergence of general social laws as a by-product. Hobhouse, a British sociologist, defined sociology as a field of science which focuses on the whole social life of man. It relates to other social sciences in a way that can be regarded as a blend of mutual exchange and stimulation. Karl Mannheim has explained sociology in terms of two key divisions, systematic and general sociology and historical sociology. Systematic sociology provides a methodical review of the main factors of coexistence, such that they are evident in every kind of society. Historical sociology deals with the historical array and existence of general forms of the society. This can be divided into two sectors, comparative sociology and social dynamics. Comparative sociology basically deals with identical historical changes and tries to highlight the general features by comparing them. It also separates general features from industrial features. Social dynamics is concerned with the interrelations that exist among different social factors and institutions in a given society, for example in an ancient society. Ginsberg has combined the main features of sociology in a way that they classify the different types and structures of social relations, specifically those that are clearly specified as institutions and associations. He tried to find connectivity between various parameters of social life, for example, economic, political, moral and legal, intellectual and social elements. It attempts to make the basic conditions of social change and persistence simpler and evaluates the sociological principles that influence social life.

Thus, on the basis of the viewpoints of many sociologists, the scope of sociology can be generally defined. To begin with, sociology should be concerned with the analysis of various institutions, associations and social groups, which have resulted from social relationships of individuals. The second step is an understanding of the different the links between various sections of the society. This objective is catered to by the functionalist school of sociology, as required. The Marxist school also exhibits the same opinion. Thus, the main area of discussion of sociology pertains to social structure. Sociology should also focus on aspects which are important in bringing about social stability and social change. Finally, sociology should also tackle issues related to the changes in pattern and the consequences of societal changes.

### Sociology as a Science

The nature of sociology as a science has become a controversial issue. Some critics do not support the ideology of sociology being regarded as a science like all other social sciences. Sociology can be regarded as a science since it comprises objective and systematic methodologies of examination and assessment. It can also be evaluated as a

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social reality, on the basis of empirical data and explanation. However, it cannot be directly compared to natural sciences, since human behaviour is not similar to natural sciences. A science may be defined in at least two ways:

- A body of organized, verified knowledge which has been secured through scientific investigation
- A method of study whereby a body of organized and verified knowledge is discovered

However, if the first definition is accepted, then sociology can be termed a science, based on the theory that it creates a body of organized and verified knowledge, after scientific investigation. To the extent that sociology forsakes myth, folklore and wishful thinking and bases its conclusions on scientific evidence, it is a science. If science is defined as methods of study, then sociology can be defined as a science because it uses scientific techniques of study.

In the history of human thinking, few of our actions have been based on verified knowledge, for people through the ages have been guided mainly by folklore, norms, values and anticipations. Recently, very few people accepted the idea of systematic observations and analysis. W.F. Ogburn, an American sociologist, opines that sociology is a science. According to him, science is to be judged by three criteria:

- The reliability of its body of knowledge
- Its organization
- Its method

Sociology depends on reliable knowledge. Thus, sociological studies of population, families, group behaviour, evolution of institutions, the process of social change, are regarded as considerably reliable. Secondly, disjointed collection of facts cannot be a science. Science should be organized and the organization of science rests upon relationships. Sociology provides a scope for inter-relationships, which is enough to encourage more discoveries. Moreover, with reference to method, a branch of knowledge can be called a science if it follows a scientific method in its studies and investigations. Sociological studies employ various methods like the historical method, case study method, social survey method, functional method, statistical method, etc. Though sociology can be considered a science, its scientific character cannot be established because it is not as accurate as natural sciences. There is no denying the fact that sociology cannot experiment and predict in the same way in which physical sciences do because human behaviour and relationships are peculiar and uncertain. Objectivity in sociology is not possible as man has his own prejudices and bias. Social phenomena cannot be exact as it is too vast and human motivations are complex and it is difficult to make predictions about human behaviour.

But such objectives raised against sociology as a science are refutable. Sociology does make use of scientific methods in the study of its subject matter. Though sociology does not support laboratory experiments, yet it does employ the techniques of science, such as the measures of sociometry, schedule, questionnaire, interview and case history. These relate measures of quantity with social phenomenon. Moreover, a sociologist also uses observation and comparison. Sociology delineates cause-effect relationship. So sociology is a scientific discipline which obeys the demands of validity that are implied by the word science. It classifies the form of social relationships and determines the connectivity between different sectors of social life. Robert Bierstedt in his book, *The Social Order*, considered sociology as a social and not a natural science.

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Thus it can be said that science is a way to find out the truth and if sociology involves application of a range of techniques and methods in the right manner, then it will achieve a scientific character.

Human social activities can be observed through scientific exploration just like any other natural phenomenon. This exploration uses scientific techniques such as: scales of sociometry, schedule, questionnaire, interview and case history. These, in turn, apply quantitative measurements to social phenomenon. Hence, they can be compared to the technique of experimentation. Sociology attempts to identify the types and forms of social relationships, especially of institutions and associations. It tries to establish the relations between different factors of social life. It also involves the deduction of general laws through a systematic study of its material. The outcome of the study of sociological principles is used as a means to resolve social problems. Consequently, sociology can be compared to a science like social psychology, clinical psychology and other sciences that relate to the existence of mankind. A sociologist can also make optimum use of two other fundamental techniques of scientific reasoning, which are observation and comparison. Sociology can also be used in the building of laws and for futuristic calculations. These laws are usually relevant and are independent of cultural changes. Sociology also explains cause-effect relationships by the analysis of social procedures and relationships.

### Importance of Sociology

The discipline of sociology is recognized widely today. Nowadays, there is growing realization about the importance of the scientific study of social phenomena and means of promoting what Giddings calls 'human adequacy'. It is of great value in modern complex society.

- **Sociology makes a scientific study of society:** Sociology has made it possible to study society in a systematic and scientific manner. Scientific knowledge about human society is needed in order to achieve progress in various fields.
- **Sociology throws more light on the social nature of man:** Sociology delves deep into the social nature of man. It tells us why man is a social animal, why he lives in groups, etc. It examines relationships between individuals and the society.
- **Sociology improves our understanding of society and increases the power of social action:** The science of society assists an individual to understand himself, his capacities, talents and limitations. It enables him to adjust to the environment. Knowledge of society, social groups, etc., helps us to lead an effective social life.
- **Sociology has contributed generously to enhance the value of human culture:** Sociology has trained us in building a rational approach to questions that concern ourselves, our religion, customs, etc. It teaches one to have an object-oriented and balanced approach. It emphasizes the importance of ignoring petty personal prejudices, ambitions that are influenced by ego and envy.
- **Sociology studies the role of institutions in the development of the individual:** The home and family, school and education, church and religion, states and government, marriage and family, etc., are important institutions through which a society functions. Furthermore, they are conditioners of an individual's knowledge of sociology.
- **Sociological knowledge is indispensable for understanding and planning of the society:** Sociological planning has been made easier by sociology. Sociology

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is often considered a vehicle of social reform and social organization. It plays an important role in reconstruction of the society.

- **The need for sociology in underdeveloped countries:** Sociologists have drawn the attention of economists regarding the social factors that have contributed to the economic backwardness of a few countries. Economists have now realized the importance of sociological knowledge in analysing the economic affairs of a country.
- **Study of society has helped several governments to promote the welfare of tribal people:** It is not only civilized societies, tribal societies also have several socio-economic problems. Studies conducted by sociologists and anthropologists regarding tribal societies have helped many governments in undertaking various social measures to promote the welfare of tribal people.

## Sociological Methods

Sociology has emerged as a distinct intellectual endeavour with the development of modern societies and the study of such societies is its principal concern. However, sociologists are also preoccupied with a broad range of issues about the nature of social interaction and human societies in general. Sociology also enables us to see the world from others' perspective rather than our own.

Comte and Spencer were, for the most part, the first sociologists. Their concerns were with the means and paths of societal development and the conditions for harmony and continued development. They presented quite different views on these issues and a comparison of their work set the stage for discussion by the three famous personalities, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber.

Emile Durkheim stressed on the practical existence of a society. He emphasized on social realities and saw sociology from a different point of view, as compared to that of psychology. Social realities restrict the freedom of members of the society to act, think and feel differently, with respect to the society. Beliefs and moral codes are transferred from one generation to the next and are imbibed by the individuals who form a society. One way of explaining social realities involves focusing on the cause of a social reality to explain its origin. The decisive cause of a social reality should be looked for among the facts that precede it. It should not depend on an individual's level of consciousness. Nevertheless, this social reality can be explained in a better way after a detailed study of its functions in the society, its role in contributing to the general needs of the social beings and its utility in establishing a social order. Durkheim believed that this social reality still survives because it is useful to the society. They owe their existence to their contributions to the maintenance of a society, in one or more ways.

Durkheim is more inclined to find harmony and he attempts to uncover the essential features of collective life which are responsible for producing it. He determines that there is a realm of 'social facts', ways of thinking, acting and feeling, which are produced by group existence, which tend to produce an integrated society. Modern society is the product of the development of the division of labour and its recent complexity presents some problems for integration. However, Durkheim is confident that he has found the essential features of harmonious, collective life which will allow sociology to intervene.

Weber views the development of modern society as a much less orderly affair and is rather pessimistic about the possibility of discovering some means of harmonizing its present condition. He attempts to understand various institutions and states of society,

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in terms of the actions of individuals. His central concept for this purpose is 'social action'. He analyses the organizations of individuals in different positions on the basis of their levels of motivation. These, in turn, rest on subjective meanings which persons attach to the things and other persons in their environment. On this basis, he examines the relation between different forms of authority, social organizations and economic distribution of rewards. He is pessimistic about the bureaucratic form of domination that is found in modern society. In his view, it is a very stable form of domination of powerful interests.

Sociology differs from most of the natural sciences in dealing with a phenomenon, which is often difficult and sometimes impossible to measure or calculate, or to subsume under relations of causality. However, this does not involve a total divergence in the methods of inquiry. It involves considering the limits of sociological enquiry and assessing what can be practically achieved. In sociology, five important methods or approaches can be distinguished, they are as follows.

- **Historical Method:** This method has taken two principal forms. The first is that of early sociologists, influenced by the philosophy of history and afterwards by biological theory of evolution. This approach involves a certain order of priorities in the problems for research and theory. It concentrates on problems of the origin of development and transformation of social institutions, societies and civilization. It is concerned with the whole span of human history and with all major institutions of society, as in the work of Comte, Spencer, etc. In Marx's view, the most important thing about people is their practical activity. The way people produce for themselves, gives shape to other aspects of their society and culture. In this way, they relate to nature and to one another in society. These are the most fundamental sets of relations. These sets of relations change and develop over the course of history. They change from one 'mode of production' to another.
- **Comparative Method:** This method was considered the method par excellence of sociology for long. It was first used by evolutionist sociologists, but its use did not involve a necessary commitment to an evolutionary approach. Durkheim, in the *Rules of Sociological Method*, clearly explained the significance of the method. After claiming that sociological explanation consists entirely of the establishment of causal connections, he observes that the only way to demonstrate that one phenomenon is the cause of another is to examine cases in which the two phenomena are simultaneously present or absent. Thus it is to be established whether one does depend on the other, or not. In many natural sciences the establishment of causal connections is facilitated by experiment, but since experiment is impossible in sociology, Durkheim suggests the use of the method of indirect experiment, i.e., the comparative method.
- **Functionalist Method:** In sociology, this method first emerged in the form of a response against the approach and assertions of evolutionists. It criticized the immature and outward application of the comparative method and the methods of 'conjectural history'. These methods used data that was neither verified nor systematic, on ancient societies, for the reconstruction of early stages of human social life. The functionalist method also criticized the objective or claim made by evolutionists to present the complete social history of mankind in scientific terms. The notion of social function was formulated by Herbert Spencer in the 19th century. Durkheim defined the function of a social institution as the correspondence between it and the needs of social organism.

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- **Formal or Systematic Method:** Formal or systematic sociology represented a reaction against the evolutionary and encyclopedic science of early sociologists. Its originator was George Simmel and it remained largely a German approach to sociology. Simmel argues that sociology is a new method, a new way of looking at facts which are already treated by other social sciences. According to him, this new approach consists of considering the 'forms' of sociation or interaction, as distinguished from the historical content. Sociology is therefore also concerned with forms of interaction which have not been studied at all by traditional social sciences. These forms appear not in major institutions, such as the state, the economic system and so on, but in minor and fleeting relationships between individuals.
- **Structural Method:** Claude Levi-Strauss proposed the structural method. Levi-Strauss offered new insights of analysis. According to Edmund Leach, 'Levi-Strauss has provided us with a new set of hypotheses about familiar material. We can look again at what we thought was understood and begin to gain entirely new insights'. The structural method began to have a certain influence, particularly in renewing the discussion of the concept of social structure.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. What are the three criteria based on which W.F. Ogburn opined that sociology is a science?
6. Why is objectivity not possible in sociology?
7. How does Weber view the development of modern society?

## 1.4 INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND FOR THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY IN THE WESTERN WORLD

Enlightenment is a major contributing factor to the development of sociology in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Enlightenment is considered to be the source behind ideas like freedom, democracy and primary values of society; the principles on which society runs now-a-days. Enlightenment was basically an intellectual movement that consisted of many philosophers and thinkers. These philosophers challenged the traditional and existing concepts of the society. The aim of the philosophers of the Enlightenment was to make people stop blindly following and listening to the ideals of the church and develop a critical thinking capacity of their own. The thinkers wanted that people must solve their problems on their own instead of waiting for God to solve the problems. These philosophers spread education among people. Education improved and flourished during this time period because of publishing of newspapers and paintings of other types of media. The period also saw the emergence of arts, writings and paintings. People were now becoming more open minded and were learning to live in a society that was ever changing. The life of people became easier and better which led to economic as well as technological boom in the society.

## 1.4.1 The Works of Intellectual Philosophers in Sociology

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The European intellectuals and thinkers during this period developed the tenets of sociology and tried to explain the socio-political changes that were taking place around them. They also tried to explain whether these changes were good for the society or not. These intellectual philosophers were Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Georg Simmel, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. These intellectual philosophers later came to be known as the classical theorists and founders of sociology.

1. **Auguste Comte (1798-1857):** Auguste Comte was a French Philosopher who came to be known as the Father of Sociology. Auguste Comte used science to understand and explain the changes taking place in the French society and coined the term sociology. He described the study of society through his scientific approach and considered sociology to be a branch of natural science. He believed that the society progressed through three stages: theological, meta-physical and positive. According to Comte, the positive stage was a scientific stage that explored the natural laws governing social changes. It was during this stage that order could be restored in the society. He developed the philosophy of positivism to understand the social world through a scientific approach. According to him, positivism enabled one to understand how a phenomenon occurred and not how. Comte was also of the opinion that using the scientific approach, people could understand how social changes affected their everyday lives.
2. **Herbert Spencer (1820-1903):** Herbert Spencer was an English sociologist and philosopher who played a major role in the intellectual development of sociology in the nineteenth century. He believed that sociology was evolutionistic and has evolved like organisms do. The main focus of his study was on the evolutionary growth of the social structures that make up the society. According to Spencer, evolution began in the inorganic world of matter and later went through the organic or living world of the plants or animals and ended in the human and social world. He believed that society also went through these phases and followed the same natural law of evolution that living beings did.
3. **Emile Durkheim (1858-1917):** Durkheim was a French sociologist. He tried to establish sociology as an independent and distinct science. He is considered as the builder of sociology. Durkheim was a modern philosopher who attempted to study the reality of society. According to him, the reality of the society was a group and the social changes that take place around the group. He studied the society objectively, empirically and factually which none of the philosophers wanted to do. Durkheim considered sociology as the study of social facts. According to him social life could be analysed only in terms of social facts which externally affected an individual, a group and finally the society.
4. **Max Weber (1864-1920):** Max Weber was a German sociologist and philosopher. He contributed to the evolution of sociology as a science. According to Weber, the basic unit of the society was an individual and it was essential to scientifically analyse the behaviour, emotions, actions and relationships of an individual. He believed in interpretative understanding of the society. According to him, the aim of a social scientist was to study the inner meaning of a social phenomenon. He considered social actions and human relationships to be qualitative and not quantitative and so suggested that these must be interpreted. According to Weber, empathy and objectivity were required for the interpretative understanding of any social phenomenon.

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**5. Karl Marx (1818-1883):** Karl Marx was a German writer, thinker and critique. Karl Marx mainly studied about the issues that were faced by people in the society. According to him, people in all societies struggled to live in the society and their struggles brought about several changes in the society and in the manner in which the people behaved with each other. Thus, he believed that the struggle of the people in the society also affected the relationships and actions of the people. He studied about social issues like class formation, class distinction, exploitation, poverty, alienation and social changes.

**6. Georg Simmel (1858-1918):** Georg Simmel studies sociology as a formal discipline. According to him, sociology deals with social relationships, the process of socialization and social organization. Simmel basically studied about social relationships. He studied the different forms of social relationships like co-operation, competition, division of labour, subordination, etc. According to Simmel, the scope of sociology was limited to only the study of social relationships whereas their contents were studied by other social sciences.

### Sociology as a scientific discipline

Sociology evolved as a scientific discipline mainly because of the fact that applied and adopted methods of natural sciences. The philosophers were always divided on whether sociology could be considered as a scientific discipline or not. Science as a discipline is a body of systematic knowledge. Science collects facts and links them in a sequence to reach a conclusion. Science has the following characteristics: objectivity, observation, accurate prediction, cause-effect relationship and experimentation. The philosophers considered sociology as a science because of the following reasons:

- **Sociology used observation as a tool:** According to philosophers, the sociologist studies the society as an observer. The sociologist considered the whole world as a laboratory and applied his observation into understanding and interpreting the human relations in the society.
- **Sociology was based on scientific methods:** Sociology, according to philosophers, was the study of human actions using scientific investigation.
- **Sociology is objective:** The philosophers who cast sociology as a science believed that objectivity was possible in sociology. Sociology was based on objective analysis of facts.
- **Sociology described cause-effect relationship:** According to philosophers, sociology like natural sciences traced the causes and found answers; thus establishing a cause-effect relationship.
- **Sociology made accurate measurements:** Like science, sociology accurately measured social relationships and phenomenon. Sociology used statistical methods to effectively and accurately measure social relationships.
- **Prediction was possible:** Sociology, like natural sciences framed laws and predicted accurately.

A lot of philosophers were also of the opinion that sociology was not a science because it did not meet the criteria to qualify as a scientific discipline. According to these philosophers, sociology lacked objectivity because a sociologist had his own prejudices and could be biased. In addition, they believed that complete objectivity in studying human behaviour was not possible. Sociology dealt with social relationships that could not be studied objectively like social structures. Sociology was not based on experimentation

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and hence could not be called a science. According to some philosophers, society, human relationships and human behaviour could not be put in a laboratory and experimented upon. Sociology also did not qualify as a science because it could not make accurate predictions. Since sociology dealt with human relationships and human behaviour, it was not easy to collect data for the same and predict the results. Also it was not possible to predict how a certain human would react or behave to a social change and so sociology was called a behavioural science and not a natural science. Another reason why sociology did not qualify as natural science was the fact that sociology could not make accurate measurement. It was not possible to accurately determine and measure the human behaviour or relationships which were qualitative and not quantitative. Lack of generalization in sociology was another reason why it could not be called a science. The reason why generalization was not possible in sociology was because no two individuals were alike and so human behaviour, relationships differed and were uniform and universally applicable.

Thus sociology evolved as a social science and not a natural science. As a scientific discipline, sociology emerged as a positive, pure, abstract, generalizing, rational and empirical science.

Thus, the intellectual philosophers were able to develop sociology as a scientific discipline. The study of these philosophers proved that the scientific study of society was possible only through a sociological analysis. They developed sociology to understand and analyse the various social problems that the people faced. Sociology according to these philosophers studied groups, cultures and societies comparatively. Sociology also emerged as a discipline that studied a wide range of social issues and how these affected the lives of the people and thus the society as a whole.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. What was the main aim of the philosophers of Enlightenment?
9. Who studied sociology purely on the basis of human relationships?
10. Who studied the social issues in sociology and what were the issues?
11. What is the nature of sociology as a science?

### 1.5 SUMMARY

- The emergence of sociology as a discipline can be traced back to the nineteenth century. Thus, sociology is not a very old field of study.
- The idea behind the emergence of sociology was to enable people to understand why the society functions the way it does.
- Sociology being the study of social relationships and institutions can be studied at all levels of the society as well as the life of a human being. While at the individual level, it deals with personal issue; at the society level, it deals with the issues that the society has to face daily.
- There were several factors that contributed to the development of sociology as a discipline.

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- Sociology is a field of science that flourished during the first part of the 19th century. It came into existence as an academic response to modernism. Since transportation and communication facilities have become increasingly advanced, it is easier for people in different parts of the world to stay connected.
- Sociology should cover the complete network of social relationships. It is presumed that these relationships depend on the position of individuals in the hierarchy of relations, with respect: (i) to one another, (ii) to the community and (iii) to the external environment.
- For achieving a perfect sociological rationalization, it is important to reach the roots of every social event with respect to the vital and psychological capacities of individuals. These capacities may be influenced by complex interactions which are a vital constituent of the community, which is connected to the external environment. If this ideal is generously conceived, it is too ambitious.
- W.F. Ogburn opines that sociology is a science. According to him, science is to be judged by three criteria:
  - The reliability of its body of knowledge
  - Its organization
  - Its method
- Sociology differs from most of the natural sciences in dealing with phenomena, which are often difficult and sometimes impossible to measure or calculate, or to subsume under relations of causality. However, this does not involve a total divergence in the methods of inquiry. It involves considering the limits upon sociological enquiry and assessing more realistically what it can achieve.
- In sociology, five important methods or approaches can be distinguished, they are as follows:
  - The historical method
  - The comparative method
  - The functionalist method
  - The formal or systematic method
  - The structural method
- During the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, there were several social and political changes that took place in the western world including the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.
- The increasing social changes and awareness of people regarding the society triggered many intellectuals to study about the causes and effects of the changes and thus emerged.
- Sociology is the study of society and the changes taking place in it. Sociology, today, is practiced as a discipline and even taught to students across the world.

## 1.6 KEY TERMS

- **Enlightenment:** A European intellectual movement of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries emphasizing reason and individualism rather than tradition.
- **Metaphysical:** Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy investigating the fundamental nature of being and the world that encompasses it.

## 1.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The main contributing factors to the emergence of sociology are French revolution, Industrial revolution and Enlightenment.
2. The French Revolution brought about changes in family life by introducing civil marriage and divorce.
3. Machines were used for production of goods during and after Industrial revolution because these increased the productivity while at the same time reduced the time, manpower and money required.
4. Telegraph as a means of communication was introduced during the Industrial revolution.
5. In the opinion of W.F. Ogburn, an American sociologist, sociology was categorized as a discipline of science because it fulfilled the following three criteria:
  - The reliability of its body of knowledge
  - Its organization
  - Its method
6. Objectivity is not possible in sociology as man has his own prejudices and bias.
7. Weber viewed the development of modern society as a much less orderly affair and is rather pessimistic about the possibility of discovering some means of harmonizing its present condition.
8. The main aim of the philosophers of enlightenment was to make people aware of their thinking capabilities. The philosophers wanted the people to think critically and act and solve their problems on their own instead of waiting for God to solve the problems.
9. George Simmel studied sociology only on the basis of human relationships.
10. Karl Marx studied the social issues while working on the evolution of sociology. The various issues he studied were class formation, class formation, class distinction, alienation, poverty and social changes.
11. Sociology as a science is a behavioural science. Sociology unlike natural sciences is social, positive, pure, abstract, rational and empirical science.

## 1.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

## Short-Answer Questions

1. Briefly describe the role of French Revolution on the emergence of sociology.
2. How did Industrial Revolution contribute to the emergence of sociology? State in brief.
3. Briefly state the views of Auguste Comte on sociology.
4. How did Max Weber study sociology?

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## Long-Answer Questions

1. Is sociology a science? Support your answer with arguments.
2. Explain the work of philosophers of the Enlightenment and how sociology emerged based on their works.
3. Discuss the different sociological methods.
4. Analyse the nature and scope of sociology.

NOTES

## 1.9 FURTHER READING

- Abel, Theodore. 1980. *The Foundations of Sociological Theory*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
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## UNIT 2 AUGUSTE COMTE

## Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Comte and Positivism
- 2.3 Hierarchy of Sciences
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Terms
- 2.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.7 Questions and Exercises
- 2.8 Further Reading

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## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

As a philosophical ideology and movement, positivism first assumed its distinctive features in the work of the French philosopher Auguste Comte, who named the systematized science of sociology. It then developed through several stages known by various names, such as Empiricriticism, Logical Positivism and Logical Empiricism and finally in the mid-20th century flowed into the movement known as Analytic and Linguistic philosophy. In its basic ideological posture, positivism is worldly, secular, anti-theological and anti meta-physical.

In his three stages, Comte combined what he considered to be an account of the historical order of development with a logical analysis of the levelled structure of the sciences. By arranging the six basic and pure sciences one upon the other in a pyramid, Comte prepared the way for Logical positivism to 'reduce' each level to the one below.

## 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Analyse the science of sociology theory propounded by Comte
- Discuss the law of human progress discussed by Comte
- Elaborate on the hierarchy of sciences proposed by Comte
- Understand social statics and dynamics as analysed by Comte

## 2.2 COMTE AND POSITIVISM

Auguste Comte was born in France in 1798 during the height of the French Revolution, a period of chaos and unrest. His parents were devout Catholics and ardent royalists. Comte was a brilliant student excelling in physics and math with an unusual memory. His early career was poorly organized and a rather self-destructive affair in which he proceeded to 'shoot himself in the foot' several times. Along with 14 others he was expelled from school after a student uprising over a geometry instructor, thus dashing hopes of an otherwise promising academic career.

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He did, nonetheless, manage to become secretary to Henri St. Simon, another prominent thinker with whom Comte shared many ideas. He met, and later married, a nineteen-year-old prostitute but had an unhappy married life. He had a falling out with St. Simon and organized on his own a subscription series of lectures on the 'Positive Philosophy'. Comte attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Seine and was rescued by a passer-by. Comte interpreted this Samaritan act as a sign that his mission in life was to complete and disseminate his positive philosophy.

In 1829, Comte completed the series of lectures, and between 1830 and 1842, published his *Cours de Philosophie Positive* in six volumes. In 1832, he managed to achieve a minor appointment at the Ecole Poly-technique, but, in 1844, he wrote a scathing article on St. Simon and the Ecole and was dismissed. During the same year, two other important events also occurred. Comte obtained a small stipend from the English philosopher, John Stuart Mill, who had been impressed by his *Positive Philosophy*, and he also began an affair with Madame Clotilde de Vaux. In 1846, she died in his arms and Comte was later to credit her with teaching him about the affective tendencies of human nature, a consideration which was to inform his suggestion for a 'religion of humanity'.

In fact, Comte was to see this religion of humanity as part of the practical application of his philosophy as recommended in his works—*The System of Positive Polity* or *Treatise of Sociology: Instituting the Religion of Humanity. Positive Philosophy* was the work in which he outlined his preferred way of knowing the world, and the *Positive Polity* contained his ideas about how to improve society, and how to establish what was, in his view, the best society possible by applying this knowledge.

According to Comte, a stable social order rested on a consistent form of thought. He saw his own thought as leading to the establishment of a more stable, industrial order. He saw this relationship between thought and practice as a natural, rather than a causal one and saw thought as evolving naturally towards the kind of philosophy which he was formulating and recommending. Ways of thinking, of philosophizing, of knowing the world, were, in his view, primary, both in the history of humankind and in his own practice. In other words, Comte believed that people acted in such a way as to correspond with the way they thought. In different societies or periods of history, furthermore, a person's way of thinking, of knowing their world, was responsible for producing the kind of society in which they lived.

### Science of Sociology

According to Comte, sociology is a social, organic science. Sociology is a relatively new, evolving science dependent upon all the foregoing theories in science. However, it is quite clear that sociology is gradually moving towards the goal of a *definite science*. Comte had a very wide conception of sociology. According to him, all other social sciences are subsumed under it. He believed in a unified integral study of all social sciences taken together. He posited that the subject matter of sociology is society. It studies the structure of the society and the set of rules governing its functions.

Since sociology tries to explore the principles which help society to stay integrated and in order, it is essential that the law of sociology should be scientific. In order to make the societal laws scientific, they should pass through the full circle of making of scientific laws, namely *observation, experimentation, comparison and classification*. What needs to be emphasized here is the fact that in making these societal laws, use of full scientific technique is necessary.

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Comte maintained that the positive science of society called sociology must pursue the method which was followed by definite sciences like astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology. He insisted that the new science must be *positive*. Positive means pursuing scientific methods of analysis and prognosis. The method of sociology includes observation as well as experimentation. Observation must be guided by a theory of social phenomena. Experimentation is controlled observation. In sociology, experimentation involves the study of pathological cases. According to him, central to sociology is the comparison of different co-existing states of human society on the various parts of the earth's surface. By this method, he argued, the different stages of evolution may be allowed once. These conventional methods of science, like observation, experimentation and comparison, must be used in combination with the historical method.

### Law of Human Progress

The law of human progress is one of Comte's the most important central ideas. He proposed that the evolution of the human mind is parallel to the evolution of any individual mind. The development of the individual human organism is termed as ontogeny. This forms the basis for the development of phylogeny or the development of the human race. In our childhood, we all believed in imaginary worlds; when we become adults, we start accepting the world with its vices and virtues. Mankind has also undertaken quite a similar journey; from believing in the make-belief to the maturity of adulthood.

According to Comte:

Each of our leading conceptions—each branch of our knowledge passes successively through three different theoretical conditions: the Theological or fictitious; Metaphysical or abstract; and the Scientific or positive. In the theological state, human mind, seeking the essential nature of beings, the first and final causes (the origin of purpose) of all effects supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings. In Metaphysical state the mind supposes abstract forces, veritable entities (that is personified abstractions) capable of producing all phenomena. In the final, the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after Absolute notions, the origin of destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws, that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance

### Theological or Fictitious State: Law of Three Stages

According to Comteian proposition, all theoretical conceptions, whether general or special, bear a supernatural influence. This kind of thinking is found among the primitive people and sometimes the thinking of children. At this state, there is substantial lack of logical and orderly thinking. However, Comte argues that the primitive man as well as children do have scientific outlook also. Owing to theological state of their minds, their understanding is characterized by an unscientific outlook. The main subject matter of the theological state is natural events. The unusual and unintelligible events of nature tend man towards theological or fictitious interpretation of events. Unable to discover the natural causes of various happenings, the primitive man attributed them to imaginary or divine force. The explanation of natural events in non-natural, divine or imaginary conditions is known as theological or fictitious state. The theological state implies belief in the other world wherein reside divine forces which control the events in this world.

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It is clear that theological state implies a belief in divine and extraterrestrial forces. Comte has classified the theological state further in three stages:

**Fetishism:** The first and primary stage in the theological state is that of *fetishism*. Fetishism is a belief that there is some living spirit in non-living objects. This is also known as *animism*. The concept of animism signifies that the inanimate objects are not dead but are possessed by living spirits. One can argue that in India, particularly rural and tribal areas, there is a widespread belief that some deities reside in tree, stones and mountains. Therefore it has been seen that people engage in the worship of a particular tree, stone mountain.

**Polytheism:** With the gradual development in human thinking, there occurred a change in the form of thinking. *Polytheism* is the next stage to fetishism. In this stage, man had classified god and every natural force had a presiding deity. Each god had some definite function and his scope and area of action was determined.

**Monotheism:** The last and most developed form of theological state is seen manifested in *monotheism*. As the very term monotheism implies, at this level of human thinking a belief in one god had replaced the earlier belief in many gods. The monotheistic thinking symbolizes the victory of human intellect and reason over non-intellectual and irrational thinking. In monotheism, it is believed that one God is supreme and that he is responsible for the maintenance of order and system in the world.

**Metaphysical or abstract state**

The metaphysical or abstract thinking marks the second stage in the evolution of human mind. According to Comte, each successive stage is an improvement upon the earlier stage. With the gradual improvement in human mind, human problems also become more intricate. The theological state was not adequate to tackle these improvements efficiently. The appearance of conflicting and opposite forces in the world presented problems which could not be successfully tackled by monotheism. It was difficult to believe that the same god was responsible for prehistoric creation as well as destruction. A single god could not account for simultaneous creation and destruction. In order to resolve this intellectual query, metaphysical thinking was developed. Under metaphysical thinking, people believe that an abstract power or force guides and determines the events in the world. Metaphysical mind disregards belief in the presence of several gods.

**Scientific or positive state**

This state is the most advance and developed form of the human mind. All metaphysical knowledge is based upon speculation and is at best inferential knowledge. There are no direct means to confirm the findings of metaphysical knowledge; it is purely a matter of belief or temperament. The modern temperament of man is such that it cannot remain satisfied with mere guesswork; it craves for positive knowledge which can be scientifically confirmed. The positive and scientific knowledge is based upon facts, and these facts are gathered by observation and experience. The observation and classification of facts are the beginning of scientific knowledge. From these facts we generalize and draw conclusions. These conclusions, in turn, are subjected to verification. Once verified, these become established laws, which can be relied upon in gathering and classifying facts. Scientific thinking is thoroughly rational and in it there is no place for any belief or superstition. According to Comte, the human mind before reaching the state of positivism must have passed through the two earlier stages of theological and metaphysical states.

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The three stages suggested by Comte have a strong idealistic basis. Yet he correlated every stage of evolution of the human mind with social organizations present in that period. The theological stage that corresponds roughly with the ancient age is dominated by the rule of the army and priests. In the metaphysical state, society was dominated by clergy and lawyers. This state roughly falls during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The modern era marks the beginning of the positive state and is generally ruled by industrialists and scientific moral guides. In the first state, the family takes centre stage, while in the second, the State rises to prominence. In the third state, however, the entire civilization has become an operative social unit.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What is the main subject matter of theological state?
2. What is the second stage of the evolution of human mind?
3. What is the other name for Comteian fetishism?

**2.3 HIERARCHY OF SCIENCES**

The hierarchy of sciences is another theory posited by Comte that gained importance in the realm of sociology. This theory is related closely to the law of the three stages. As mankind moves on from one stage to another, evolving from the knowledge of every step, similarly, scientific knowledge also passes from one stage to the next, evolving through every step, though at a different rate. 'Any kind of knowledge reaches the positive stage early in proportion to its generality, simplicity, and independence of other departments.' Thus, we notice that astrology, which is the most simple and general type of all natural sciences, developed first and was followed by chemistry, biology and physics. Sociology comes last in this list of sciences. The evolution and development of the sciences depended upon the development of the sciences that came before it in a hierarchy marked by the law of increasing complexity.

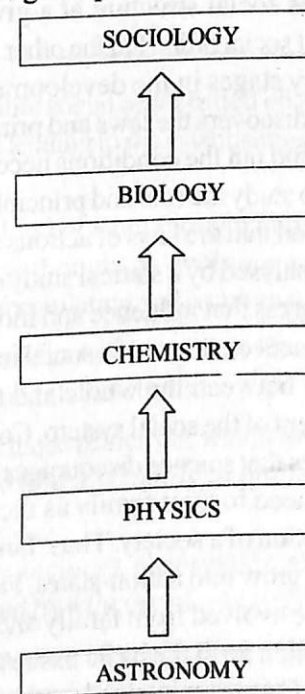


Fig. 2.1 Hierarchy of Sciences

## NOTES

The most independent and complex of all sciences are the social sciences. These developed after the other distinct sciences emerged and definitely helped in the completion of the modern, positive method. The sciences that evolved prior to the social sciences had just prepared the groundwork. The general sense of the natural law developed through the social sciences. This was possible as social science employs all the resources that physical sciences did, and also uses the historical method which investigate by gradual filtration, unlike other methods that investigate by comparison. The chief phenomenon in sociology that is the gradual and continuous influence of generations upon each other would be misguided or unnoticed for want of the necessary key historical analysis. Sociology, like all other later sciences, also depended on the special methodological characteristics. It mostly depended on biology which, in turn, developed from the study of organic wholes. Sociology also shared this emphasis on organic unity with biology. If the society is divided into parts, sociology will fail to study it. The society can only be studied when it is treated as a whole consisting of various sub-parts. The parts of this whole are, however, treated by physical sciences better than by sociology.

**Social Statics and Dynamics**

According to Comte, sociology is a wide discipline. In order to study the discipline, he divided it into two parts. These are: social statics and social dynamics.

- **Social statics:** Social statics is concerned with the present structure of the society. It studies the current laws, rules and present condition of the society.
- **Social dynamics:** Social dynamics observed as to how the present social laws are affecting the society. It also evaluates the social structure. Social dynamics also studies the correlation between various social facts. Social statics is the distinction between two aspects of theory and not between two class of facts.

The distinction between social statics and dynamics is not between two class of facts but between two aspects of theory. These are akin to order and progress. Order helps maintain peace and harmony across a community while progress is the social development. Thus, these four aspects, *statis*, *dynamics*, *order* and *progress* are related to each other. Social statics analyses social structure at a given moment. This helps in the understanding of the nature of social order. On the other hand, social dynamics describes the successive and necessary stages in the development of mind and society. Social dynamics is a science which discovers the laws and principles underlying social change and progress. It also tries to find out the conditions necessary to maintain the continuity of social progress. We have to study the rule and principle of social change in a historical perspective. Comte maintained that the laws of actions and reactions of the various sub-parts of a social system are analysed by a statical study of sociology. Statics also studies the fundamental laws of progress that influence and modify social growth. It studies the relations between the constituent elements of a social infrastructure. There must always be a 'spontaneous harmony between the whole and the parts of the social system'. While analysing the component of the social system, Comte did not focus on *individuals* as elementary parts. He argues that science discourages us to take society as constituting of individuals. Instead, we need to treat family as the smallest unit, or at the most, a couple that forms the foundation of a society. Thus, families gradually grow to become clans or tribes and then tribes grow into nation-states. Family is thus the basis of all other human associations, for these evolved from family and kinship groups. He also argues that the classes and castes which form the basic tissues of the social systems, cities and towns are the integral organs. Comte maintained that the law of three stages and progress theories constitute social dynamics. While the laws of coexistence in a society are

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examined by social statics, the rules of succession are studied by social dynamics. The two combine to fulfil the needs of study of the modern society. He assigned prime importance to religion and language as serving as the vessels wherein the culture, nature and thoughts of our ancestors are held. As we participate in the linguistic universe, we are part of a linguistic community. We relate to each other as we understand each other's language; without this collective tool, maintaining a social order is completely impossible.

In addition to a common language, a common religion is also essential to stabilize a social order. Religion permits men to love their fellow men and to overcome their egos. It is a strong bond that holds a society together in a common cult and common system of beliefs. Religion is the base of social order. The third factor that binds men is the division of labour. According to Comte, men who share the same type of labour, form a fraternity. The extent of this division of labour leads to social complexities and complications. The system of division of labour bonded people together as they were dependent on others for the completion of their work. On the other hand, this same system promoted and nurtured the growth of capitalism and materialism. Social institutions like religion, language and division of labour, according to Comte, are not important in their own accord; rather, the contributions of these institutions in furtherance of social development are more important for sociologists. The parts and the whole of a social system need to be connected harmoniously. Political institutions, social manners, laws and rules need to be consolidated in order to develop humanity.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

4. What do you understand by social dynamics?
5. State the distinction between social statics and dynamics.

**2.4 SUMMARY**

- According to Comte, a stable social order rested on a consistent form of thought. He saw his own thought as leading to the establishment of a more stable, industrial order.
- Comte saw this relationship between thought and practice as a natural rather than a causal one and saw thought as evolving naturally toward the kind of philosophy which he was formulating and recommending.
- The subject matter of sociology is society. It studies the structure of the society and the set of rules governing its functions.
- Sociology tries to explore these principles which help society to stay integrated and in order. According to him it is highly important that the law of sociology should be scientific.
- The method of sociology includes observation as well as experimentation. Observation must be guided by a theory of social phenomena.
- Each branch of knowledge passes through three stages, theological or fictitious, metaphysical or abstract, and scientific or positive.
- Social statics is concerned with the present structure of the society. It studies the current laws rule and present condition of the society.

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## UNIT 3 HERBERT SPENCER

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### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Social Darwinism
- 3.3 Evolution of State
  - 3.3.1 Organic Analogy
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 Key Terms
- 3.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.7 Questions and Exercises
- 3.8 Further Reading

### NOTES

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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

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Like Comte, Spencer saw in sociology the potential to unify the sciences, or to develop what he called a 'synthetic philosophy'. He believed that the natural laws discovered by natural scientists were not limited to natural phenomena; these laws revealed an underlying order to the universe that could explain natural and social phenomena alike.

According to Spencer's synthetic philosophy, the laws of nature applied to the organic realm as much as to the inorganic, and to the human mind as much as to the rest of creation. Even in his writings on ethics, he held that it was possible to discover laws of morality that had the same authority as laws of nature.

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### 3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Analyse the theory of social evolution and its stages as developed by Spencer
- Understand the concept of Social Darwinism
- Differentiate between military, industrial and ethical state
- Explain the concept of organic analogy
- Analyse Spencer's concept of society and individual

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### 3.2 SOCIAL DARWINISM

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Herbert Spencer was born in Derby, England on 27 April 1820. He was the only one of the nine children in his family to survive infancy. His father was a teacher of mathematics and science but, ironically, did not hold this institutional enterprise in very high esteem and, along with Spencer's uncle, taught the young Herbert at home. He thus received formal training only in mathematics and physics.

Given his scientific inclinations, Spencer procured a job as engineer for the London and Birmingham Railroad, eventually becoming its chief engineer but later resigning to edit a magazine called the *Economist*. His first major publication was an article in the

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*Nonconformist* entitled 'The Proper Sphere of Government', a sphere which Spencer decided was extremely limited. In 1853 he gave up his job. In 1862, Spencer's first book, *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy* was published. In 1867 was published the multi-volume work called *Principles of Biology*. Another multi-volume work, *Principles of Psychology*, was published in 1872 followed by *Principles of Sociology* in 1896. His eight-volume study on descriptive sociology was published during 1873-1894. In 1873 was published his highly acclaimed book, *The Study of Sociology*.

Spencer believed that the knowledge of society is a science and can be achieved only by scientific methods. While analysing his theory of evolution, Spencer divided the Universe into two segments: Known and Unknown. The segment of Unknown relates to religion and its subject matter is God and Soul. The Unknown has nothing to do with science, it is beyond the realm of science and irrelevant to science. Science pertains to the segment called Known. According to Spencer, science also tries to explain the origin of the matter and understand the laws governing its evolution, growth and development. Spencer was of the view that the rules and laws governing evolution in the physical world also apply to society. In order to understand the law of social evolution, it is necessary to understand the laws of physical evolution. Spencer believed that society has characteristics of a science. The science of sociology is super organic. Society is the science concerned exclusively with the phenomena resulting from the cooperation of citizens.

In fact, much of Spencer's thought is evolutionary in character. For Spencer, not only biological species or societies evolve, but all matter, being highly unstable in its simplest forms, tend to differentiate and become more complex. Spencer proposed a theory of general evolution, according to which matter passes from a relatively indefinite homogeneity to a relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity. Biological species tend to evolve in such a way as to become more complex (i.e., to differentiate internally, to have interrelated, specialized parts). This also holds true for individual species, similarly for super-organic entities like societies. Societies evolve by adapting internally and externally. In Spencer's scheme, there is a continuous evolution from militant to industrial societies. Militant societies, nearer to the beginning of the evolutionary process, were concerned mainly with issues of offense and defense. Industrial societies tend to be mainly concerned with the production of goods.

The evolution of species or societies, for Spencer, is a matter of the 'survival of the fittest'. Darwin's term for this notion is 'natural selection', and he was later to suggest that he actually preferred Spencer's phrase. According to this notion, evolutionary processes filter out unfit species. The eventual outcome of this process, for Spencer, is a better, even *morally perfect* civilization. Since he viewed this outcome as the result of a natural process, he was adamant about his laissez-faire or non-intervention policy. Adaptation is key in this process; individuals or species should not, in his view, be helped in any way, lest a weak or unfit species continue to exist and thus weaken the whole. While species and societies evolved according to laws of their own, there is a supremely individualist assumption in Spencer's view. The perfection of civilization demands the perfection of the social atom, the individual human.

Spencer's primary concern was the changes that evolution brought in the social structure and social institutions. He was not bothered with the accompanying mental states of mankind. Evolution is that 'change from a state of relatively indefinite, incoherent, homogeneity to a state of relatively definite, coherent, heterogeneity', was to Spencer that universal process, which explains alike both the 'earliest changes which the universe

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at large is supposed to have undergone and those latest changes which we trace in society and products of social life'. Spencer maintained that the evolution of mankind and human societies were only a part of the natural law that could be applied to all living beings in this universe. Sociology can become a science only when it is based on the idea of natural, evolutionary law. 'There can be no complete acceptance of sociology as a science so long as the belief in a social order of conforming to natural law, survives.' He put forward the theory that like physical evolution, in social evolution also there is a movement from simple to complex. The society is gradually moving from homogenous structure to heterogeneous structure. Besides, society is also moving from indefinite state to definite state.

The progression from complex to simple is a part of universal change. This is manifested in geological, climatic, as well as organic changes on the Earth's surface. This universal phenomenon may be noticed in the growth of any individual organism, the culmination of all races coming together, or even the evolution of the basic social structure. The movement from simplicity to complexity is present in the evolution of the religious, political and economic aspects of the social progress. All concrete and abstract human activity bears witness to this universal movement.

The advance from the simple to the complex through a process of successive differentiations is seen alike in the earliest changes of the Universe. It is seen in the geologic and climatic evolution of the Earth; it is seen in the unfolding of every single organism on its surface; it is seen in the evolution of humanity, whether contemplated in the civilized individual, or in the aggregate of races; it is seen in the evolution of society in respect of its political, its religious and its economic organization; and it is seen in the evolution of all those endless concrete and abstract products of human activity.

According to Spencer, the theory of social evolution is divided into two stages. These are:

(i) **The movement from simple to compound societies**

This evolutionary stage is seen in the following four types of societies in terms of evolutionary levels; simple society, compound society, doubly compound society, triple compound society.

- (a) **Simple societies:** This is the most primitive society without any complexities and consisting of several families.
- (b) **Compound societies:** This society is basically a clan society, which means many simple societies make up this compound society.
- (c) **Doubly compound societies:** Through further aggregation of compound societies develops doubly compound society consisting of several clans compounded into tribes or tribal society.
- (d) **Triple compound societies:** In this society, tribes are organized into nation-states. This is the present form of the world.

(ii) **Change from military to industrial society**

This type of social structure depends on the relation of a society to other societies in its significant environment. While the military society is characterized by 'compulsory cooperation', industrial society is based upon 'voluntary cooperation'. Secondly, while the military society has a centralized government, the industrial society has a decentralized government. Thirdly, while the military society has economic autonomy it is not found in industrial society. The chief characteristic of military society is the *domination of*

State over all social organizations. In the industrial State, on the other hand, the functions of the State are limited. Most of the societies in the present time are industrial societies.

## NOTES

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What according to Darwin is 'natural selection'?
2. What are triple compound societies?

## 3.3 EVOLUTION OF STATE

According to Herbert Spencer, the origin of the State is based upon the element of *fear* among the individuals. The State is based upon the authority of powerful individuals. It evolves into three stages: (i) Military State, (ii) Industrial State and (iii) Ethical State.

- (i) **Military State:** In the formative period, when society was absolutely simple, indefinite and homogenous, there was no state authority. Various groups and communities used to fight with one another. During this period of chaos and lawlessness, some brave fighters were accepted as leaders whom others obeyed. However, since war was not occasional there was no permanent leader. Due to this reason, Military State was established. This State was hereditary as the post of the head was determined by paternity. Gradually, a committee was formed to advise the leader of the State. The members of the committee were either nominated by the head or were the people's representatives. The main aim of the Military State was to fight for self-defense as well as to conquer other States. The armies were most important and the society was organized for their welfare. The chief of the army was the king and head of the State. The State had all the rights over public property. The State was not for the individual but individuals were for the State. Therefore, there was no place for individual freedom.
- (ii) **Industrial State:** The second stage in evolution was the Industrial State. Man understood that in industrial progress lies his economic industrial progress. Therefore, the State gradually attended to the progress of the industries. This led to change in the nature of State authority. It was gradually converted into Industrial State, the aim of which was the progress of industries. While the Military State aimed at victory in wars, the Industrial State did not aim at it. It gave more importance to the freedom and rights of the individuals. The interference of the State in the life of the individual gradually decreased. The representatives of the people occupied privileged places in the political system. Gradually, democratic principles evolved and the State became concerned with general welfare.
- (iii) **Ethical State:** While Military State and Industrial State have been realized, Spencer's concept of *Ethical State* belongs to the future. This concept is imaginary. According to Spencer, the completion of the evolution of Industrial State will result in perfection of material richness of the people. This will satisfy the selfish nature of man. Therefore, he will now naturally follow norms of ethics. Unethical behaviour is due to material deprivations. As material deprivation disappears, ethical State will be a reality. In fact, there will be no State, the State will wither away as no eternal administration will be required. Man will be governed by himself. According to Spencer, human society is gradually evolving to this state.

## 3.3.1 Organic Analogy

Herbert Spencer's theoretical idea of organic analogy was influenced by biology. His initial connection to biology helped him draw an analogy between the society and the biological organism. According to him, societies are akin to living bodies. As germs originate from a minuscule organism, similarly, societies also grow and evolve. He also argues that society is made up of organized systems, just like an organism; the same definition of life applies to both society and biology. Only when we witness the growth, maturity and decay of a society and the transformations passed through by aggregates of all orders, inorganic and organic, is there reached the concept of sociology as science.

The social structure is a living organism. It is made up of parts which can be distinguished but which cannot survive or exist except within the framework of society. Spencer wanted to explain clearly the nature of social structure by the help of this theory. He believes that all individuals lose their individuality and become a part of the society. On the other hand, he is also an individualist, a firm advocate of the independence and rights of the individual. He only tried to point out certain striking similarities between the individual living organism and society on account of which the individual may be regarded as microcosmic society and society as macrocosmic individual. He argues:

It is also the character of social bodies, as of living bodies, that while they increase in size they increase in structure. Like a low animal, the embryo of a high one has few distinguishable parts; but while it acquires greater mass, its parts multiply and differentiate. It is thus with a society. At initial stage the unlikeness among its groups of units are inconspicuous in number and degree, but as population augments, divisions and subdivisions become more numerous and more decided. Further, in the social organism as in the individual organism, differentiation ceases only with that completion of the type which marks maturity and precede decay.

Spencer drew a comparison between the society and individual thus:

- (i) **Different from inanimate bodies:** The first similarity between a living organism and society is their difference from inanimate bodies. None of them is inanimate. In inanimate objects, there is no growth and development, but on the other hand, there is continuous growth and development in both society and living organism. Thus, on account of their common difference from the inanimate bodies, society and living organism may be regarded to be similar.
- (ii) **Increase in quantity leads to change in structure:** The second similarity in society and living organism is that increase of quantity in both leads to change in their structure. According to Spencer, living organism starts from being a unicellular creature; with the increase in cells, differentiation of organs results. At the higher level of evolution, the structure of the body becomes quite complex. Similar is the case with society. In the beginning, the structure of society is very simple. At this level each individual does all the work by himself and there is no differentiation of functions. Each man himself is a craftsman, hunter, sculptor, etc. But with the quantitative increase in society, the structure of society becomes increasingly complex and there is increasing differentiation of functions in society. Like the organs of the organism, the functions in society become specialized.

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- (iii) **Change in structure leads to change in functions:** With the change in the structure in organisms and communities, there results a change in their functions. The functions become more and more sophisticated and specialized.
- (iv) **Differentiation as well as harmony of organs:** While it is true that with the evolution there develops greater differentiation in the organs of society as also that of an individual, but along with this, there is also harmony between various organs. Each organ is *complementary* to the other and not opposed. This holds true both for the body of a living organism and society.
- (v) **Loss of an organ does not necessarily result in the loss of organism:** The society as well as individual is an organism. It is a fact common for both that a loss of some organs does not necessarily result in the *death* of an organism. If an individual loses his hand, it is not necessary that this may result in his death. Similarly, in the case of society, loss of a particular association does not necessarily mean death of the society.
- (vi) **Similar processes and method of organization:** There is another similarity between the society and the living organism. According to Spencer, there are various systems in an organism responsible for its efficient functioning. Similarly, in a society, transport system, production and distribution systems, etc., fulfil their respective roles.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- State the three stages of the evolution of State.
- State one similarity between a living organism and society.

## 3.4 SUMMARY

- Social dynamics observed as to how the present social laws are affecting the society. It also evaluates the social structure. Social statics also study the correlation between various social facts.
- Spencer believed that the knowledge of society is a science and can be achieved only by scientific method. While analysing his theory of evolution, Spencer has divided the Universe into two segments: Known and Unknown.
- Spencer was of the view that the rules and laws governing evolution in the physical world also apply to society. In order to understand the law of social evolution it is necessary to understand the laws of physical evolution.
- Spencer believed that society has characteristics of a science. The science of sociology is super organic. Society is the science concerned exclusively with the phenomena resulting from the cooperation of citizens.
- Spencer proposed the theory of general evolution, according to which matter passes from a relatively indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity.
- Spencer's first and foremost concern was evolutionary changes in social structures and social institutions, rather than with the attendant mental states.

## NOTES

- The society is gradually moving from homogenous structure to heterogeneous structure.
- According to Spencer the theory of social evolution divided into two stages—the movement from simple to compound societies, and change from military to industrial society.
- According to Spencer, the social structure is a living organism. It is made up of parts which can be distinguished but which cannot survive or exist except within the framework of society.

## 3.5 KEY TERMS

- Simple societies:** Primitive society without any complexities and consisting of several families.
- Compound societies:** Many simple societies make up a compound society.
- Doubly compound societies:** Through further aggregation of compound societies develops doubly compound society consisting of several clans compounded into tribes or tribal society.
- Organic analogy:** Theory that holds that societies are akin to living organisms.

## 3.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

- The evolution of species or societies, for Spencer, is a matter of the 'survival of the fittest'. Darwin's term for this notion is 'natural selection', and he was later to suggest that he actually preferred Spencer's phrase. According to this notion, evolutionary processes filter out unfit species.
- In triple compound societies, tribes are organized into nation-states. This is the present form of the world.
- The State is based upon the authority of powerful individuals. It evolves into three stages: (i) Military State, (ii) Industrial State and (iii) Ethical State.
- The first similarity between a living organism and society is their difference from inanimate bodies. None of them is inanimate. In inanimate objects, there is no growth and development, but on the other hand, there is continuous growth and development in both society and living organism.

## 3.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

## Short-Answer Questions

- List two of Spencer's famous works.
- Why did Spencer use the term 'survival of the fittest' in relation to sociology?
- What are the stages of the social evolution theory?
- Write a short note on the Military State.
- Why is Spencer's Ethical State imaginary?



**Long-Answer Questions**

1. Elaborate on the theory of organic analogy.
2. Discuss Spencer's idea of social evolution.
3. How has Spencer differentiated between society and individual? Discuss.
4. Write a descriptive note on 'Social Darwinism'.

**NOTES****3.8 FURTHER READING**

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**UNIT 4 EMILE DURKHEIM****Structure**

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Emile Durkheim and Sociological Theories
  - 4.2.1 Mechanical and Organic Solidarity and Social Fact
  - 4.2.2 Theory of Suicide
- 4.3 Sociology of Religion
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 Key Terms
- 4.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.7 Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Further Reading

**NOTES****4.0 INTRODUCTION**

Emile Durkheim offered a more coherent theory than any of the other sociological theorists. He articulated the concepts in a rather clear, theoretically oriented manner and used it in a variety of specific works. Supporters would say that the clarity in Durkheim's thinking stems from this coherence, whereas detractors might contend that the clarity is the result of the comparative simplicity of his theory. Whatever the case, it is certainly easier to realize the real essence of Durkheim's thinking than that of other classical theorists.

The heart of Durkheim's theory lies in his concept of social fact. Durkheim differentiated between the two basic types of social facts — material and non-material. Although both of these occupied a place of causal priority in his theorizing, material social facts (for example, division of labour, dynamic density and law) were not the most important large-scale forces in Durkheim's theoretical system. His main focus was on non-material social facts. He dealt with a number of them, including collective conscience, collective representations and social currents.

Durkheim's study of suicide is a good illustration of the significance of non-material social facts in his work. In his basic causal model, changes in non-material social facts ultimately cause differences in suicide rates. 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 the evidence that sociology has a legitimate place in the social sciences. After all, it was argued, if sociology could explain an act as suicide as individualistic, then it certainly could be used to explain other, less individual aspects of social life.

In his later work, Durkheim focused on another aspect of culture, called '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 all social structures of the clan. Furthermore, totemism was seen as a specific form of the collective conscience manifested in a primitive society.

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Its source, as well as the source of all collective products, lies in the process of collective effervescence. In the end, Durkheim argued that religion and society are one and the same — two manifestations of the same general process.

Since he identified society with God, and also because he deified society, Durkheim did not urge for a social revolution. Instead, he should be seen as a social reformer interested in improving the way the society functions. Whereas Marx saw irreconcilable differences between capitalist and workers, Durkheim believed that these groups could be united in occupational associations. He urged that these associations should be set up to restore collective morality in the modern world and to cope with some of the curable pathologies of the modern division of labour. However in the end, such narrow, structural reforms could not really come up with the broader cultural problem that plagues the modern world. Here, Durkheim invested some hope in the curious modern system of collective morality that he labelled as the 'cult of the individual'.

#### 4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Assess Emile Durkheim's contribution to the growth and evolution of sociological theories
- Analyse sociology as a science
- Describe the division of labour and forms of solidarity
- Evaluate Durkheim's study of suicide
- Explain Durkheim's theory of religion
- Discuss Durkheim's system of classification

#### 4.2 EMILE DURKHEIM AND SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

Emile Durkheim was born on 15 April 1858 in Epinal, France. He was the descendent of a long line of rabbis, and himself studied to be a rabbi. However, by the time he was in his teens, he rejected his heritage and became an agnostic. From now onwards, his lifelong interest in religion was academic instead of theological. He was not satisfied with his religious training. The same was the case with his general education and its focus on literary and aesthetic matters. He wanted schooling in scientific methods and in the moral principles required to direct the social life. He did not opt for a traditional academic career in philosophy, and instead, strived to acquire the scientific training for contributing to the moral guidance of society. Even though he was interested in scientific sociology, there were no specific fields of sociology at that time. So between 1882 and 1887, he taught philosophy in a number of provincial schools.

His appetite for science was whetted further by a trip to Germany, where he was exposed to the scientific psychology being pioneered by Wilhelm Wundt. In the years immediately after his visit to Germany, Durkheim published a good deal of works, basing his concepts, in part, on his experience there. These publications helped him gain a position in the department of philosophy at the University of Bordeaux in 1887. There Durkheim taught the first course in social science in a French university. This was a

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particularly impressive accomplishment because only a decade earlier, a furore had erupted in a French university by the mentioned Auguste Comte due to a student dissertation. Durkheim's main responsibility, however, was the teaching of courses in education to school teachers, and his most important course was the area of moral education. His goal was to communicate a moral system to the educators who he hoped would then pass it to young people in an effort to help reverse the moral degeneration he saw around him in the French society.

The years that followed were characterized by a series of personal successes for Durkheim. In 1893, he published his French doctoral thesis, *The Division of Labour in Society*, as well as a thesis on Montesquieu. His major methodological statement, *The Rules of Sociological Method* appeared in 1895, followed (in 1897) by his empirical application of those methods in the study *Suicide*. By 1896, he had become a full professor at Bordeaux. In 1902, he was called to the famous French university, the Sorbonne, and in 1906 he was named as 'the professor of the science of education', a title which was changed in 1913 to 'professor of the science of education and sociology'. His other famous work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, was published in 1912.

Presently, Durkheim is most often thought of as a political conservative, and his influence within sociology certainly has been a conservative one. However during his time, he was considered as a liberal. This was exemplified by the active public role he played in the defence of Alfred Dreyfus, and Jewish army captain whose court-martial for treason was felt by many to be anti-Semitic.

Durkheim was deeply offended by the Dreyfus affair, particularly its anti-Semitism. However, Durkheim did not attribute this anti-Semitism to racism among the French people. Characteristically, he saw it as a symptom of the moral sickness confronting French society as a whole. He made the following remark:

'When society undergoes suffering, it feels the need to find someone whom it can hold responsible for its sickness, on whom it can avenge its misfortunes; and those against whom public opinion already discriminates are naturally designated for this role. These are in pariahs who serve as expiatory victims. What confirms me in this interpretation is the way in which the result of Dreyfus's trial was greeted in 1894. There was a surge of joy in the boulevards. People celebrated as a triumph what should have been a cause for public mourning. At least they knew whom to blame for the charge: economic troubles and moral distress in which they lived. The trouble came from the Jews. The charge had been officially proved. By this very fact alone, things already seemed to be getting better and people felt consoled.'

Thus, Durkheim's interest in the Dreyfus affair stemmed from his deep and lifelong interest in morality and the moral crisis confronting modern society. To Durkheim, the answer to the Dreyfus affair and crises like it lay in ending the moral disorder in society. Since it could not be done quickly or easily, Durkheim suggested government efforts to show the public how it is being misled. He urged people to 'have the courage to proclaim aloud what they think, and to unite together in order to achieve victory in the struggle against public madness' (Lukes, 1972; p. 347).

'Durkheim's (1928/1962) interest in socialism is also taken as evidence against the idea that he was a conservative, but his kind of socialism was very different from the

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kind that an out of date hypotheses' (Lukes, 1972; 323). To Durkheim, socialism represented a movement aimed at the moral regeneration of society through scientific morality; and he was not interested in short-term political methods or the economic aspects of socialism. He did not see the proletariat as the salvation of society, and he was greatly opposed to agitation or violence. Socialism for Durkheim was very different from what we usually think of as socialism; it simply represented a system in which the moral principles discovered by scientific sociology were to be applied.'

Durkheim, as we will see throughout this unit, had a profound influence on the development of sociology, but his influence was not restricted to only that. Much of his impact on other fields came through the journal *L'Année Sociologique*, which he founded in 1898. An intellectual circle arose around the journal with Durkheim at its centre. Through it, he and his ideas influenced such fields as anthropology, history, linguistics and — somewhat ironically, considering his early attacks on the field — psychology.

Durkheim died on 15 November 1917, as a celebrated figure in French intellectual circles. However, it was not until over twenty years later, with the publication of Talcott Parsons' *The Structure of Social Action* (1937), that his work became a significant influence on American sociology.

### Sociology as a Science

Durkheim's sociology has a very sound foundation, based on definite epistemology. Durkheim, was a French sociologist whose efforts and intellect, throughout his career, were mainly directed at building a sociological science with a stable epistemological foundation. The two principles that can be clearly seen in Durkheim's sociology are as follows:

- Sociology must be a science which has a methodology similar to the physical-natural sciences, that is, based on positivism.
- The positivist science of society goes against philosophy and psychology.

Durkheim considered the newly developed positivism of Auguste Comte, one of the founders of sociology, as a model of 'science'. Clearly he had a strong influence on Durkheim's sociology. Remember, Comte's thought favoured a positive progression of all the sciences whose last stage will be sociology (which he initially referred to as social physics). He called sociology the most sophisticated positive science, because its study integrated in humanity all the contributions made by earlier sciences.

Durkheim's assumption was that the science dealt with 'things' instead of 'ideas' or 'concepts'. Therefore, his initial point is generally the sensation, sensitive information and the exterior of things. In his own words,

Since it is for the sensation for which is given us the exterior of the things, it therefore can be said in short: science, in order to be objective, it should start, not from concepts that have been formed without her, but from sensation. It is of the sensitive data of those that it should take the elements of its initial definitions directly.

This very positivism lead to the construction of Durkheim's most popular epistemological 'rules' (*regles*) — the rule that social facts (*faits*) should be considered as 'things'. The term 'thing' for Durkheim was purely realistic. He felt that 'It is a thing, indeed, all what is given, all what offers or, rather, it is imposed to the observation. To treat the phenomena like things, it is to treat them in quality of data that constitute the

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starting point of science.' Therefore, according to Durkheim, 'thing' has no 'material' meaning as may have been the usual connotation because sociology should be aimed at doing away with 'preconceived ideas'. Sociology should deviate from sociological idealism, away from the analysis of apriori ideas considered to be the starting point of research and according to which needs are required to be adjusted to reality. Although 'thing' was ambiguous, Durkheim was sure of its goals, which were as follows:

1. To ensure that sociology was objective and scientific and followed the positivist paradigm of the physical-natural sciences. Like physics and astronomy, Sociology takes into consideration a limited number of facts, as the subject matter of study for its researchers. Therefore, it does not study illusions or speculations.
2. The word 'thing' becomes clear from the fact that the sociologist reaches a socially and historically constructed reality, which is imposed on people. The social reality is constructed, for sure, but becomes a concrete reality, which forces or restricts us. It is the real meaning of 'thing', that is, a social fact, which, despite being a creation of human beings, comes to them as a given and requires a sociologist to merely scrutinize, describe and explain it. From a methodological perspective, the most important thing Durkheim feels is that sociology, like other sciences, relies on 'observation'. Therefore, the social facts, or 'things', have a dual quality — 'They are external to the individual and have a coercive character over him.'

Durkheim aimed to preserve philosophy in the secondary education, for which he wished philosophy could be a lot more than merely abstract literature (*littérature abstraite*). It wasn't enough for philosophy to be a mere rhetoric based on an artist's talent. He wanted philosophy to be a lot more scientific by diverging from deductions based on metaphysics. In fact, what guided his epistemology was the rejection of metaphysics, which would become clearer in the study of religion, denying the supernatural emphatically. He disagrees with philosophy so that sociology could stop being an ambiguous social philosophy aimed at rendering a positivist consistency to the study of social facts.

Being apprehensive about the ground of morality, Durkheim presumed a social reality which played an important role of being the moral ground like Kant who introduced God as the 'postulate of practical reason'.

The individual considers social facts to be not just external but also coercive because they are born from society, not from him or his authority. It originates as a *sui generis* reality. Although Durkheim does not deny that society is made up of people: 'truly, society has a 'substratum' in the form of individuals but is not reduced to them'. 'If it is possible to say, in certain way, that the collective representations are exterior to the individual consciences, it is because they do not derive from isolate individuals, but of his grouping; what is very different.' He uses the model of chemical synthesis to explain his thesis. This does not get reduced to the sum of its constituent elements but gives new properties to the parts or components that make it up.

Sociologism conflicts with Gabriel Tarde's views that limited sociology to the study of the individual consciences, and restricted collective behaviour to the social contagion through imitation. Durkheim wanted sociology to comprise proper subject matter, which was not the same as psychology. He introduced his theory of society as *sui generis* reality. Therefore, he was the creator of the social facts which sociology studies.

#### 4.2.1 Mechanical and Organic Solidarity and Social Fact

The first major book of Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, was also his doctoral thesis. He was deeply influenced by the theories of Auguste Comte. Not surprisingly, the relationship or link between the individual and the collective forms the theme of the book. Through this book, Durkheim wishes to find out, 'how can a multiplicity of individuals achieve what is the condition of social existence, namely a consensus?'

Durkheim's reply is that it is through the distinction between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. The main feature of 'mechanical solidarity' is resemblance. Durkheim feels that there is hardly any difference between individuals in a mechanical solidarity-based society. The members of this solidarity, not only experience the same emotions, they also treasure the same values and consider the same things sacred. Therefore, they resemble each other.

On the other hand, organic solidarity, is characterized by consensus on the coherent unity of the collectivity, which takes place by expressing differentiation. Here, the individuals differ from each other, and this difference is the reason for the consensus. Durkheim calls the solidarity based on the differentiation of individuals, 'organic' solidarity because it compares living organisms. For instance, there is a vast difference between the heart and the lungs but both are essential for an organism to function properly.

Durkheim felt that in the two forms of solidarity, the societies called primitive during Durkheim's time are today those where mechanical solidarity is predominant. From the historical point of view, since the people of a tribe can be interchanged, the individual does not come first. It is Durkheim's belief that the consciousness attained by a person about himself is born of the historical development of the collective self. In primitive societies, individuals did not differ, everyone was the same. In each one's consciousness, collective feelings predominate in terms of number and intensity.

According to Durkheim, a segment resembles a social group wherein the individual is tightly and closely placed. This segment is not only locally situated but also relatively isolated, leading its own life. Mechanical solidarity of resemblance is the primary feature of the segment. It is not only self-sufficient but separated from the outside world with hardly any communication. Segmental organization is a contradiction of the phenomena of differentiation designated by the term 'organic solidarity'. In certain societies, it is possible for a segmental structure to exist, with an extremely advanced form of economic division of labour.

In continuation of local autonomies, and in the force of custom, the idea of segmental structure is not recognized with the solidarity of resemblance. It only implies the power of tradition. The concept of segmental structure is not identified with solidarity of resemblance but implies the comparative segregation and self-sufficiency of a several elements. In other words, a full society is like a combination of several similar segments, under absolute rule or autocracy. You could actually imagine several tribes or regionally independent groups, under perhaps one powerful central authority, lacking the unity of resemblance of the segment being disturbed. It would be without the demarcation of function characteristic of organic solidarity operating on the level of the whole society.

It is very important to note here that Durkheim's division of labour differs from the concept of division of labour as defined by economists. The demarcation of occupations and multiplication of industrial activities stand for the social differentiation which took precedence according to Durkheim. The beginning of social differentiation which took fall of mechanical solidarity and segmental structures.

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Durkheim believed that collective consciousness is 'the body of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society'. These beliefs and sentiments have an existence of their own. However, the collective consciousness requiring an individual's sentiments and beliefs to continue, is logically separate from individual consciousness. The development of collective consciousness takes place according to its own set of rules and laws and is not merely the expression or the outcome of individual consciousness.

There are different levels of collective consciousness in different social orders. According to Durkheim, wherever societies are dominated by mechanical solidarity, the greater part of individual consciousness is adopted by the collective consciousness. In such situations, a major share of existence is governed by social imperatives and prohibitions. Durkheim suggested that these prohibitions and social imperatives should not be embraced by the members of a society based on mechanical solidarity, on their own or of their own accord. Instead, these are imposed on the majority. An individual gives in to such imperatives just as he would to a higher authority. The force of this collective consciousness coincides with its degree. In primitive societies, there exists a resentment against crime as well as collective consciousness. Each act of social existence, such as religious rites, is characterized by a deep level of accuracy. The details of what ought to be done and thought, are imposed by the collective consciousness on individual members. On the contrary, Durkheim says that in societies characterized by the difference between individuals, more often than not, each individual is free to believe, to want and to act as he wishes. For Durkheim, organic solidarity probably meant a loosening of the hold that collective consciousness has on the sphere of existence; a reduction in collective reaction against the imposed prohibitions, and most of all, scope for individual analysis of social imperative.

You can comprehend Durkheim's suggestions with the following example. In a primitive society, the demands of justice will be determined accurately by collective sentiments. In societies characterized by division of labour, the demands of justice will be formulated by the collective consciousness in a general manner and only in a concept. In the first example, justice implies that a given person receives a given thing. In the second example, what justice demands is that each one receives his due. This 'due' comprises several probable things, which are not really free in the true sense of the word nor are they unambiguously fixed.

Durkheim proposed a thought which was the core of his entire sociology. For him, an individual is born of society, and not the other way round. The historical priority of societies in which the individuals resemble one another, are so to speak lost in the whole, over societies whose members have acquired both awareness in their individuality and the capability to express it. Collectivist societies, societies in which each one resembles everyone else, come first in time. From this historical priority, there results a rationale of priority in the justification of social phenomena. The division of labour is seen by many as the gain made by individuals by dividing the task so as to increase the volume produced of the collectivity. However, this clarification as an understanding of individual behaviour is considered by Durkheim as a reversal of a true order. By believing that men divided is work between themselves, and assigned each individual a task of his own so as to increase the collective output and its usefulness, one is presuming that each individual is different and also conscious of his difference before social differentiation. If Durkheim's historical idea is true, their awareness of individuality could not last before organic solidarity and the division of labour. Therefore, it is Durkheim's belief that the rational pursuit of increased output cannot offer an explanation for social differentiation, as this pursuit

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presumes that very social differentiation which it is expected to explain. The outline of Durkheim's central idea, which he uses as a base to define sociology was the priority of the whole over the parts. He believed that the social entity was not reducible to the sum of its elements.

When he analysed the concept of division of labour, Durkheim found two prominent ideas (i) the historical priority of societies where individual consciousness is wholly outside itself, and the collectivity, and not the state of the collectivity by individual phenomena. (ii) The division of labour talked about by Durkheim is an arrangement of the society as a whole, which is expressed technically or economically as division of labour. If you wish to examine a social phenomenon in a scientific manner, you will have to study it without any bias, as an outsider. You must identify the technique that will help you not only recognize but also comprehend the states of awareness which are not apprehensible in a direct way. Durkheim investigates these expressions of the phenomena of consciousness in *De la division du travail social*, where he differentiates between repressive law and cooperative law. The former offers punishment to offenders and criminals. The latter, also known as restitutive law does not favour punishment for those violating social rules but promotes restoration of things to order when an offence has been committed. It promotes organization of cooperation among individuals.

According to Durkheim, in societies dominated by mechanical solidarity, repressive law represents collective consciousness. The very fact that it multiplies punishments, reveals the force of widespread sentiments, their scope and their particularization. With the increasing strength of collective conscience, there is an increase in crimes too. For Durkheim, crime implies progression of a prohibition. In the sociological sense, a crime is merely an act, which the collective consciousness forbids or prohibits. It is immaterial that this act may appear to be innocent in the eyes of observers from different societies or centuries after the event. In a sociological study, there can only be an external definition of crime in terms of the condition of the collective consciousness of the concerned society. This is the prototype of the objective and therefore of the relativists' definition of crime. Sociologically, a person labelled as a criminal is not necessarily one who is guilty in relation to God or to our conception of justice. The criminal is merely the individual living in society but refusing to follow the rules or obey the laws. This makes the consideration of Socrates as a criminal rather just.

Following the theory of crime, Durkheim went on to explain the theory of punishment. He rejected the classic explanations of punishment wherein the function of punishment is to check the guilty act and stop it from occurring again. It is Durkheim's belief that the point and meaning of punishment is not to scare. Instead, the rationale is to render satisfaction to the common consciousness. For Durkheim, an act committed by an individual member of the collective offends the collective consciousness, which needs to be compensated. The compensation comes in the form of punishment of the guilty, which satisfies the collective. Sociologically speaking, Durkheim's analysis of the punishment could be considered rather accurate.

The second kind of law is the one Durkheim usually refers to as restitutive. The point is no longer to punish, but to re-establish the condition of things as it should have been in harmony with justice. A man who has not settled his debt must pay it. Nonetheless, this restitutive law, of which commercial law is an example, is not the only type of law characteristics of societies with organic solidarity. At any rate, we must understand restitutive law in a very broad sense whereby it includes all aspects of legislation aiming to bring upon cooperation among individuals, administrative law and constitutional law

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which belong to the same token to the group of cooperative legislation. They are less the expression of the sentiments common to a collectivity than the organization of regular and ordered co-existence among individuals who are already differentiated.

Modern society is not based on agreement anymore than the division of labour is explained by the rational decision of individual to increase the common productivity by dividing the tasks among them. If modern society were a contractualist society, then it would explain in terms of individual behaviour, and it is exactly the opposite of what Durkheim desires to show. While opposing contractualists like Spencer, as well as the economists, Durkheim does not reject that in modern societies, an increasing responsibility is indeed played by contracts freely accomplished among individuals. However, this contractual agreement is a derivative of the arrangement of the society and a derivative of the state of the collective consciousness in the modern society. In order for an increasingly wider sphere to exist in which individuals may freely reach agreement between themselves, the society must first of all have a legal structure which authorizes free choice on the part of individuals. In other words, inter-individual contracts take place within a social background which is not determined by the persons themselves. It is the division of labour by differentiation which is the original condition for the existence of the sphere of agreement. Contracts are accomplished between individuals, but the order and set of laws according to which these agreements are concluded are determined by the legislation which in turn expresses the idea shared by the whole society of the just and the unjust, the permissible and the prohibited.

The society in which the organic type of solidarity exists is not defined by the replacement of agreement for community. Nor is the modern society defined by the substitution of the industrial type for the military type. Modern society is defined first and foremost by the phenomenon of social demarcation of which contractualism is the result. Now we must look for the reason of the phenomenon we are studying, the reason of the organic solidarity or of social differentiation seen as an arrangement, characteristic of modern societies. It is not a priori, and it may even be unsightly that one can indeed find the reason of the phenomenon which is not simple and isolable, but which is rather an aspect of the whole of society. Durkheim, however, wants to decide the reason of phenomenon through which he has examined the growth of the division of labour in modern societies.

As we have seen, we are dealing here with a basically social phenomenon. When the phenomenon to be explained is essentially social, the reason, in harmony with the principal of homogeneity of cause and effect, also ought to be social. Thus, we do away with the individualist explanation. Curiously, Durkheim gets rid of an explanation which Comte had also considered as eliminated, i.e., the explanation whereby the vital factor in social growth was held to be boredom, or the effort to overcome or avoid boredom. He also discusses the search for happiness as an explanation, for, he says, nothing proves that men in modern societies are happier than men in archaic societies.

The division of labour cannot be explained by boredom or by the pursuit of happiness or by the increase of pleasure or by the wish to increase the productivity of collective labour. The division of collective labour, being a social phenomenon, can only be explained by another social phenomenon as a mixture of the quantity, the material density and moral density of the society.

The quantity of a society is simply the number of individuals belonging to a particular collectivity. However, only quantity is not the basis of social differentiation. In order for quantity — increase in number — to bring about differentiation, there must also be both

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material and moral density. Density in the material sense is the number of individuals on a particular ground surface. Moral density, it seems, is approximately the intensity of communication between individuals, i.e., the intensity of interaction. The extra communication there is between individuals, the extra they work together, the extra trade or competition they have with one another, the greater the density together; and in this way, social differentiation will result.

Durkheim describes an idea made fashionable by Darwin in the second half of the nineteenth century — the fight for survival. Why does the growing amount of interaction between individuals, itself created by material density, produce social differentiation? This is so because the more individuals are trying to live together, the more intense the struggle for survival becomes. Social demarcation is, so to speak, the peaceful way out to the fight for survival. Instead of somebody getting eliminated so that others may survive, as in the animal kingdom, social differentiation enables a greater number of individuals to survive by differentiation. Each man ceases to be in rivalry with all, each man is only in opposition with a few of his fellows. Each man is in a position to inhabit his place, to play his role, to execute visuals once they are no longer alike but different, each contributing on his own unusual manner to the survival of all.

This type of explanation is in keeping with what Durkheim considered to be a tenet of the sociological method — the clarification of a social phenomenon by another phenomena, rather than the justification of a social phenomenon by individual phenomena.

#### 4.2.2 Theory of Suicide

Durkheim's best known book is about his study of suicide. His aim in this book was not only to provide an account of suicide, but also to illustrate how his methodology could be applied to even the most individual of acts. Durkheim in this book showed as to what extent the individual actions are determined by the collective reality. Durkheim demonstrated that the taking of one's life, apparently the most individual and personal of acts, was socially patterned. He showed that social forces existing outside the individual shaped the likelihood that a person would commit suicide.

We can define suicide as a positive or negative act performed by the victim himself and which strives to produce a result directly or indirectly in the form of death. An example of a 'positive act' would be to shoot oneself in the temple or to hang oneself. And an example to show that suicide is committed in a negative act would be to remain in a burning building or to refuse all nourishment so as to starve oneself to death. According to Durkheim's definition, we can also take an example of a hunger strike carried out until death as suicide. The distinction between directly and indirectly corresponds to the comparison between positive and negative. Death is produced directly if a gunshot is put in the temple; but if someone refuses to eat anything or if someone deliberately stays in a burning building, then these negative acts would bring about the desired result, i.e., death, indirectly or in the near future.

The study of suicide deals both with a pathological aspect of the modern societies and with a phenomenon illuminating in the most striking way the relation of the individual to the collectivity. Individuals are determined by the collective reality as anxiously shown by Durkheim. An extraordinary force is now being related to this phenomenon of suicide, since the fact of taking one's own life is considered to be most supremely individual. According to Durkheim, if he found out that the society is governed by this phenomenon, then he would have proved it with the truth of his own thesis by the very case unfavourable

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to it. Durkheim says that it is the society which governs the solitary act of a desperate individual who wants to end his life at any cost. The concept of suicide is not only recognized as such, but taking an example of an officer who lets himself be blown up rather than surrender can be considered as a suicide. Suicide can be regarded as an instance of voluntary death surrounded by glory and the aura of heroism.

The suicide rate is relatively constant when its frequency is studied in a given population. And this characteristic can be found in a region, or a province, or a whole society. According to Durkheim's analysis, suicide rate can be termed as a social phenomenon. The distinction between relation of the social phenomenon (the suicide rates) and the individual phenomenon (suicide) is the most important thing from the point of view of theory.

Psychological explanation is dismissed by Durkheim. However, he says that there is psychological predisposition to suicide, and this predisposition can be explained in psychological or psychopathological terms. Individuals suffering from brain disorders are more likely to kill themselves under certain given circumstances. Nonetheless, it is the social force that determines the suicide, not psychological forces as said by Durkheim. The distinction must be considered carefully between social determination and psychological predisposition. The scientific discussion will focus on these two terms.

To prove the formula of psychological predisposition and sociological determination, classical method of concomitant variations is used by Durkheim. He also tries to prove that there is no correlation between the frequency of psychopathological states and that of suicides, and he also examines certain variations in the suicide rate in different populations. No correlation is found between the hereditary tendencies and the suicide rate. The hypothesis that the efficient cause of suicide is transmitted by heredity can hardly be compared with the increase in the percentage of suicides with age. Interpretation of cases of suicide in the same family can be denied in this way. Nonetheless, a predisposition to suicide may be transmitted by heredity as cases of multiple suicides in the same family were observed. However, Durkheim dismisses both the hypotheses and the interpretation of suicide as deriving from the phenomenon of imitation. The keystone of the social order was considered to be an imitation as viewed by Gabriel Tarde. The term imitation consists of three confusing phenomena. Firstly, the mutual sentiments experienced by a large number of people would be called the fusion of consciousness. The Revolutionary mob can be cited as the typical example of this. The identities of the consciousness of individuals tend to lose in the revolutionary mob: the emotions felt are same for each one as the next; mutual sentiments are stirred into the individuals. Passion, acts and beliefs belong to each because they belong to all. Collectivity itself is the basis of the phenomenon and not one or more individuals.

However, there isn't the true fusion of consciousness, as the individual often adapts himself to the collectivity, and he behaves like others. The individual wishes simply not to be conspicuous, and he yields to social imperatives which are more or less diffused, watered-down form of social imperative that can be taken as fashion. If a person wore a different dress other than what fashion required for that particular season, then he would feel devaluated and humiliated. So, in this case we found that there was submission of the individual to the collective rule instead of imitation. So, finally we can say that the designation imitation is the only strict value in the sense 'and act which has for its immediate antecedent the representation of a similar act, previously performed by another, without the intervention, between representation and execution, of any explicit or implicit intellectual operation relating to the intrinsic character of the act performed'.

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Contagion and epidemic are taken by Durkheim as two phenomena. This distinction is quite useful. Firstly contagion should be called an inter-individual one, or even an individual phenomenon. This type of phenomenon proceeds from one individual to another. However, as in the case of an epidemic, there is something else besides the process of contagion that comes into play. The epidemic is a collective phenomenon whose basis is the whole of the society but it may be transmitted by contagion.

The phenomenon of imitation is the determining factor in the conception of the suicide rates, as statically analysed by Durkheim. The process of refutation is as follows. According to the process, if we consider suicide to be contagion, then we would be able to see the geographical distribution of suicide as shown by areas that showed particularly high cases and where the suicide rate is higher and was spreading to other regions. But nothing of this sort is shown in the analyses on the geographical maps of suicide. The region where the suicide rate is particularly low appears next to the region where the suicide rate is particularly high. So, the hypothesis of contagion is thereby incompatible with the irregular distribution of suicide rates. But in certain cases, contagion may come into play.

According to Durkheim, incomplete and partial statistics dealing with only a small number are taken by him as the suicide statistics. Every year the suicide rate varies from one hundred to three hundred. It is important to have an idea of the magnitude of these figures. For skeptical reasons, the doctors have maintained that the study of variations in the suicide rate is almost of no consequence in view of the small numbers considered as well as the possible inaccuracies in the statistics. With a certain number of circumstances, the suicide rate varies as observed by Durkheim, which he then takes into consideration. The statistical correlations can determine the social types of suicides, as believed by him. There are three types of suicides that Durkheim has defined:

- Egoist suicide
- Altruist suicide
- Anomic suicide

The correlation between the suicide rate and integrating social context like family and religion, is the double form of marriage and children and results in the first type of suicide, i.e., egoist suicide. Generally speaking, the suicide rates vary with age. It is found to be higher in men than in women, and it also increases with age. According to Durkheim's German statistics, he analysed that the suicide rates also vary with religion. He established that the frequency of suicides in the population of Catholic religion is less than that the number of suicides in the population of Protestant religion. Further, Durkheim compares the situation between the single or widowed men and women, and that of married men and women. Simple statistical methods are used to establish these comparisons. The frequency of suicides in married and single men of the same age is compared in order to establish the coefficient of preservation, as called by Durkheim. As a result of marriage, there is reduction in the frequency of suicide at a given age. Similarly, for single or married women, for widows and widowers, he establishes the coefficient of preservation or coefficient of aggravation. According to certain statistics, married women suffer with a coefficient of aggravation; if they are childless, they will not enjoy the coefficient of preservation. And to give it an exact name, today's psychologists have been able to label this type of situation in women as frustration about not having a child. In such cases, the disproportion between expectation and fulfillment is too great.

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Egoist men and women are those who think primarily of themselves, especially when they are not integrated into a social group, and when the desires that motivate them are not limited to the measure compatible with human destiny by the social authority of the group. Such persons commit suicide more often than others when they come across these situations. The second type of suicide is the 'altruist suicide'. There are two principle examples given in Durkheim's book. The first example is required by the collectivity, which is observed in ancient societies; that is, after the death of her husband the widow who agrees takes her place on the pyre to be burned alive with her dead husband. In this example, the suicide that is attempted is through the complete disappearance of the individual into group, and the suicide does not take place because of an excess of individualism. The individual does not even think of asserting his right to live, but instead chooses death in conformity with social imperatives.

Similarity, altruist suicide can be said to be committed by the captain of the ship who chooses not to survive its loss. The individual suppresses his own instinct of self-preservation. He obeys the orders of the group to sacrifice himself to the internalized social imperatives. Taking an example of modern times, we can look at the increase in the number of suicide rates in the professional body, the army. Suicide is committed a little more often by the soldiers than the civilians of the same age and class. Soldiers especially who are non-commissioned officers, or who belong to a strongly integrated group who commit suicide do not come into the category of the egoist suicide. Here, commissioned officers are listed because enlisted men may regard their military status as temporary, and they may combine obedience with a very great liberty in their evaluation of the system. The final major form of suicide discussed by Durkheim is anomic suicide which interests him the most because of its characteristics of the modern day society. The statistical correlation between the frequency of suicide and economic crisis can be indicated by this type of anomic suicide. A tendency in periods of economic crisis is indicated by the statistics. According to the statistical numbers, one can find a reduction in the frequency of suicides in the times of great political events. For example, the number of suicides during war time is smaller.

During the economic crisis, the frequency of anomic suicide increases; and also with the rise in divorce rates the frequency of suicides goes up. The influence of divorce on both men and women with regard to the frequency of suicide is studied extensively by Durkheim. The divorced woman is less likely to be threatened by suicide as compared to divorced man who is more likely to be threatened by suicide. Because of the tolerance of custom, man retains a certain freedom and finds equilibrium and discipline in marriage. Women, on the other hand, were more apt to find discipline than freedom in marriage as it was written by Durkheim in a previous article. After divorce the man returns to it with indifference, to the disparity between desires and satisfaction. On the other hand, woman feels more free and independent, and this partly compensates for the loss after divorce. There is endless competition among individuals as the social existence is not ruled by customs anymore. The expectations in life are high, and also there is a great deal of demand from it. The disproportion between the desires and the satisfaction is found to be in a continual rising mode leading to more sufferings at the mental and physical levels. Therefore, the suicidogenic impulse is on the rise. It is the result of restlessness and dissatisfaction prevailing in the atmosphere.

There is also the fourth type of suicide which is mentioned briefly as a footnote in Durkheim's work. This type of suicide is fatalistic suicide. Anomic suicide is more likely to occur in situations in which regulations are too weak, whereas fatalistic suicide is

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more likely to occur in situations in which there is excessive regulation. According to Durkheim, the persons who are more likely to commit fatalistic suicide are the 'persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline' (1897/1951:276). The perfect example for this type of suicide will be of a slave who takes his own life because of the hopelessness related to the oppressive regulations of his actions.

The causes of suicide are essentially social even if it is an individual phenomenon. There are social forces, 'suicidogenic impulses', occurring through society whose beginning is not from the individual but the collectivity. These forces are real and the determining cause of suicide. Of course, says Durkheim, these 'suicidogenic impulses' are not present in any human being taken at random. If a human being commits suicide, it is in all probability because he was likely to behave in a particular way by his psychological make-up, nervous weakness or neurotic imbalance. The psychological predispositions are created by the 'suicidogenic impulses' which are the creation of social circumstances, because human beings living in the modern society have a great risk of hurting their sensibilities.

The true causes are the social forces. These social forces differ from one another; from one religion to another; and from one group to another. This gets us back to the main concept of Durkheim society, according to which the societies are by nature heterogeneous in relation to individuals; that there are phenomena forces, whose foundation is the collectivity and not the totality of the individuals. Phenomena or forces which can be explained only when taken as a whole were generated by the individuals together. Therefore, we can say that individual phenomena are governed specially by social phenomena; each person believing that he is obeying himself to end his life is the most impressive example of the social forces which motivate individuals to their deaths.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. State the two principles of Durkheim's sociology.
2. How is Durkheim's division of labour different from the concept defined by economists?
3. State the process of refutation.

### 4.3 SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

Let us analyse Durkheim's sociology of religion.

The following are the characteristics of the modern society:

- Organic solidarity
- Social differentiation
- Density of population
- Intensity of communication
- Struggle for survival

These are not to be regarded as abnormal because they are all related to the essence of modern society.

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Modern societies at times show pathological symptoms and insufficient integration of the individual into the collective. This type of anomic suicide, according to Durkheim, corresponds to a rise in the suicide rate during times of economic crisis as well as in times of prosperity, i.e., when activity is exaggerated, intercourse and competition are amplified. These are inseparable from the society we belong to or live in, but which become pathological after certain limits.

Durkheim believes that religion does not help to solve the issue of anomic suicides. Religion is incapable of providing remedies for curing the pathological type of suicide. What Durkheim thought was the basic demand for the group for reintegration was discipline. Individuals are required to control their desires, obey rules and imperatives that not only fix the objectives they set for themselves but also indicate the means to be used rightly. In modern societies, not only are religions becoming more abstract but also possess a level of intellectual ity. Even though they have lost their function of social constraint to some extent, they encourage individuals to overcome their passions, to follow spiritual law, but they are incapable of pointing out the rules to be obeyed in secular life.

According to Durkheim, modern religions are now incapable of ensuring discipline to the same degree as in the past. They hardly possess any authority over morals. It is Durkheim's belief that, if left to himself, man has unlimited desires to motivate him. Usually, an individual has infinite desires, but the first necessity of morality and of society is discipline. Man requires to be disciplined by a superior force possessing the following features:

- It has to be commanding
- It has to be lovable

According to Durkheim, this force, which not only compels but also attracts can come only from the society. A general theory of religion can be derived by analysing the simplest and most primitive religious institutions. This statement provides Durkheim's leading idea, that is, it is possible to legitimately base the valid theory of higher religious values on a study of the primitive forms of religion.

Durkheim felt that science is the supreme intellectual and moral authority in modern day societies, and that societies are not only individualist but also rationalist. Though it is possible to transcend science, it is impossible to ignore its teaching or challenges. Society itself determines and supports the growth of individualism and nationalism. All societies need common beliefs, which can no longer be provided by traditional religion because religion does not fulfil the needs of the scientific spirit. The simple solution given by Durkheim is that science itself is capable of disclosing that all said and done, deep down, religion is not in contradiction to science. His suggestion is to discover reality that lies beneath all religions. Though religion is not a recreation of science, it is capable of providing us the confidence in the ability of the society to offer itself in every age with the goods it requires. Durkheim expresses this as follows - 'Religious interests are merely the symbolic form of social and moral interests.' Religion essentially divides the world into two kinds of phenomena:

- Sacred
- Profane

Religion, therefore, is not limited to the belief in a transcendent god. Religions exist without god, for example, the Buddhists believe that the idea of the supernatural cannot precede the idea of a natural order. The sacred comprises a body of rituals,



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customs, rites, things and beliefs. Religion comprises the body of corresponding beliefs and rites, when several sacred things maintain relations of coordination and subordination with one another so as to form a similar system.

Durkheim defines religion as follows – ‘A religion is an interdependent system of beliefs and practices regarding things which are sacred, that is to say, apart, forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite all those who follow them in a single moral community called a church.’

The next step of the study does away with interpretations that contradict Durkheim's. Interpretations stated in his book are animism and naturism. As per animism, religious beliefs are considered to be held within spirits. These spirits are the transfiguration of the experience men have about their two-fold nature of body and soul. Naturism implies human beings worshipping transfigured natural forces. Durkheim says that religion would indicate a kind of collective hallucination either to love spirits whose unreality he/she affirms, or to love natural forces transfigured merely by the means of fear.

Durkheim aims to establish the reality of the object of faith without accepting the intellectual object of faith and the intellectual content of traditional religions. In his eyes, the development of scientific nationalism has doomed traditional religions. However, he feels it will protect whatever it seems to be destroying by showing that in the last analysis, men worshipped only their society, nothing beyond or other than that.

Durkheim refers to Tylor's theory, which began with the phenomena of the dream. Dreams make people see themselves in places where they are actually not. They kind of see their own doubles. It is rather convenient for people to imagine this. Following death, this double also gets detached to become a floating spirit, either a good one or a bad genus. As per this interpretation, early humans found it difficult to differentiate between the animate and the inanimate. Durkheim refuted by taking up the elements of this interpretation one at a time. Why should one consider the dream so important? If we assume that not everyone conceives a double, why is this double considered sacred? Why is it considered to be an extraordinary import? According to Durkheim, ancestor worship is not a primitive cult. Also, it is not correct that primitive cults were particularly addressed to the dead — the cult of the dead.

Having declared the fundamental nature of religion as sacred, Durkheim has no difficulty in expressing the weaknesses of the animist explanation. This explanation may throw light on the world of spirits. However, in Durkheim's eyes the world of spirits is not sacred.

Durkheim regards that the science of religions presupposes the unreality of the transcendent as a subject of principle. The transcendent, being mystical, is automatically done away with by the scientific method. Therefore, the challenge is to rediscover the reality of a religion after abolishing the supernatural from it.

A significant idea in Durkheim's thought is that of totemism being the simplest religions. This implies an evolutionist origin of religious history. In the perspective of a non-evolutionist viewpoint, totemism would be one religion among others — one simple religion among others. If Durkheim asserts that it is the simplest, most elementary religion, he is implicitly acknowledging that religion has a progression from a single origin.

This simple religion comprised ‘clan and totem’. The clan refers to a kindred group not based on the ties of consanguinity. It is a human group with its identity coming from the connection established with a plant or animal, with a genus or type of plant or animal. The transmission of the totem recognized with the clan is effectuated in a variety

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of ways. The most common way of transmission is through the mother, but it is not a case of absolute regularity or of law. There are clan totems, but there are also individual totems and totems of more widespread groups like matrimonial classes.

Every totem possesses its emblem, also called blazon. Each clan has an object, such as a piece of wood or even polished stones, on which the totem is symbolically represented. Ordinary objects, called *churinga*, are transfigured the moment they carry the emblem of the totem. They also get infused by the holy quality associated with the totem. In modern societies, the flag is the equivalent of the *churinga* of the Australians. The flag of a collectivity is considered sacred as far as the native land is concerned. It is the equivalent of certain phenomena studied by Durkheim. Totemic things, or objects carrying the symbol or emblem of the totem, result in behaviour distinctive of the religious order, i.e., either the practice of non-participation or positive practices. The clan members should avoid eating or touching the totem or the objects possessing similar holy quality of the totem. They must exhibit several ways of respect with regard to the totem.

A sphere of holy comprises:

- (i) The very plants or animals which are totem
- (ii) The items bearing the representation of the totem

Eventually, the revered quality is conveyed to individuals. Holy things include plants, animals, their representations, individuals connected to these sacred objects through clan involvement. This realm of sacred things is prepared in a methodical manner. There are profane things towards which people behave in an economic manner as economic activities are considered the model of profane action itself.

Durkheim does not believe that totemism descends from ancestor worship. According to him, primitive phenomenon manifests itself in animal worship, placing individual totemism as anterior to clan totemism. He does not accept interpretations according to which local totemism, i.e., the attribution of a totem to a fixed locality, is the basic phenomenon. That is, for him, historically and logically, the totemism of the clan.

According to him, what the Australians refer to as external to profane things is primarily an anonymous, impersonal force which is personified randomly in a plant, an animal or the representation of any of those. All worship and belief is directed towards this impersonal and anonymous force.

Durkheim feels that society supports the rise of values because persons, brought together and living in communication with one another, are capable of making the divine create a religion through the exaltation of festivals.

Durkheim alludes to the revolutionary cult. On the occasion of the French Revolution, individuals were also seized with a kind of sacred eagerness. The terms ‘nation’, ‘liberty’ and ‘revolution’ were charged with a blessed value. Such periods of turmoil are favourable to the collective exaltations which produce the sacred. Durkheim admits that the exaltation during the French Revolution was insufficient to give rise to a new religion. But, he believed that other turmoil will arise and there will be a moment when modern societies will again be gripped by the sacred passion, from which new religions will originate.

Thus, the sociological understanding of religion takes two forms. One of these is expressed by the following plan:

In totemism, human beings worship their own society even without understanding it. Holiness is first connected to the collective and impersonal force which symbolizes

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the society. The second version of the theory believes that societies are discarded to give rise to gods or religions when they are in an exalted state. This takes place when society progresses in direction to strengthen itself. In Australian tribes, this exaltation takes place in the form of rituals, that exist even today.

Religion comprises a collection of beliefs, expressed orally and taking on the form of a system of thought.

Durkheim emphasized the importance of two kinds of social phenomena:

- Symbols
- Rites

A lot of social behaviour is addressed not merely to objects but also to their symbols. Human beings address their social behaviour to these objects/things themselves, as well as their symbols.

Durkheim proposes a detailed theory of rites where he differentiates between the types of rites and their functions. He states three kinds of rites:

- Negative rites
- Positive rites
- Odd rites or rites of compensation

Negative rites are interdicts such as prohibition of eating or touching. They develop in the direction of all religious practices of asceticism. Positive rites, on the other hand, are rites of communion aimed at promoting procreation or reproduction. Durkheim examines the mimetic or representative rites, which attempt to emulate the things one wishes to bring about.

These negative, positive or peculiar rites all have the primary purpose of establishing a social order. They are aimed at supporting the community, renewing the sense of belonging to the group, sustaining belief and faith, etc. A religion continues to exist only by practices which are both symbols of the belief and the traditions of renewing them.

Durkheim tries to understand the religious attitude and practices of the Australian tribes as well as the habits of thinking related to these beliefs. He develops a sociological theory of knowledge by examining Australian totemism. For him, religion is the centre from which not ethical and religious rules originate through differentiation. It is also the point of birth of scientific thought.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Durkheim considered religion to be the most significant institution of society, which formed the foundation for other social forms. This is so because religion knits humanity through collective consciousness. He believed that religion was born in the early human societies due to an inclination to relate collective emotions with an intangible force. With time, emotions came to symbolize something and interactions were transformed into rituals giving way to organized religion. As a result, there was a distinction the sacred and the profane. However, religion was eventually eclipsed by other social facts, and science and individualism began to have more relevance than religion. So, even when we see that religion no longer has the same hold over people's lives, it must be noted that it is religion that is fundamental to the society's existence, and that has made social interactions possible. Though other forces have come into existence, still religion cannot be replaced with any of these forces. Durkheim is skeptical about the advent of modernity and considers it as 'a period of transition and moral mediocrity'.

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Durkheim claimed that if we wish to understand the society, we must first try to understand how their origin is related to religion. For him, religion begot other social forms. Durkheim opined that it is the society that creates categories, and he refers to these categories as collective creations. So, as societies form, categories are formed too; but it is not done consciously. These categories precede individual experiences. It was along these lines that Durkheim tried to bridge the gap between seeing categories as constructed out of human experience and as logically prior to that experience. We understand the world by understanding social facts; for instance, we chiefly use calendar to measure time, but calendar was invented to keep track of our social gatherings and rituals; and these rituals have their origin in religion itself. Durkheim suggested that even science has its roots in religion. Durkheim remarks that 'religion gave birth to all that is essential in the society'.

## System of Classification

It is probable that man has always classified, more or less clearly, the things on which he lived, according to the means he used to get them; for example, animals living in the water, or in the air or on the ground. But at first, such groups were not connected with each other or systematized. They were divisions, and distinctions of ideas, not schemes of classification. Moreover, it is evident that these distinctions are closely linked to practical concerns, of which they merely express certain aspects. The Australians do not classify the universe between the totems of his tribe with a view to regulate his conduct or even to justify his practice. It is because of the idea of the totem being fundamental for him that he is under an obligation to place everything else that he knows in relation to it. Therefore, we may think that the conditions on which these very ancient classifications are based may have played a key role in the origin of the classificatory function in general.

It is very simple to analyse how these classifications were modelled on the closest and the most basic form of social organization. However, it is not going far enough. Society was not just a model followed by the classificatory thought. It comprised its own divisions that served as divisions for the classification system. Social categories were the first logical categories; classes of men were the first classes of things into which these things were brought into integration. It happened because men grouped and identified themselves in the form of groups. Further, in their ideas they grouped other things, and in the beginning, the two means of grouping were merged to the point of becoming indistinguishable. Moieties were the first genera — clans, the first species. Things were supposed to be essential parts of society, and their place in society determined their place in nature. One may even wonder whether the schematic manner in which genera are usually conceived may not have depended in part on the same influences. It is a fact of current observation that the things that they comprise are commonly imagined as placed in a kind of ideational milieu, with a more or less plainly delimited spatial circumscription. It is definitely not without cause that concepts and their interrelations have so usually been represented by concentric and eccentric circles, interior and exterior to each other, etc.

Not just the external forms of classes, but also the relations uniting them among themselves possess social origin. Since human groups fit one into another — the clan into the moiety, the moiety into the tribe — hence, the groups of things are ordered in the similar manner. Their regular reduction in span, from genus to species, species to variety, and so forth, stems from the equally diminishing extent presented by social groups as one leaves the largest and oldest, and reaches the more recent and the more

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derivative. If the totality of things is viewed as a single system, it is because the society itself is viewed in a similar manner. It is a whole; or rather it is the exclusive whole to which everything is related. Hence, logical hierarchy is just another aspect of social hierarchy, and the unity of knowledge is nothing more than the very unity of the collectivity, enlarged to the universe.

Additionally, the ties that unite the things within a group or different groups to each other are themselves viewed as social ties. The expressions by which we refer to these relations still possess a moral implication; but whereas for us they are barely more than metaphors, initially they meant what they stood for. Things belonging to the same class were actually taken as relatives of the individuals of the same social groups, and hence, as a result, of each other. They are of the same flesh and the same family. Thus, logical relations are, in a sense, domestic relations. Sometimes, they can be compared at all points with the one existing between a master and an object possessed, and between a chief and his subjects. One may even wonder whether the idea of the pre-eminence of genus over species, so strange from a positivistic view point, may not be conceived here in its rudimentary form. Among the Zuni, the animals symbolizing the six main clans are set in sovereign charge over their respective sub-clans and over creatures of all kinds that are grouped with them.

But if the foregoing has allowed us to understand how the notion of classes, linked to each other in a single system, could have been born; we still do not know what the forces were which induced men to divide things as they did between the classes. From the fact that the external form of classification was furnished by society, it does not necessarily follow that the way in which the framework was used is due to reasons of the same origin. A priori, it is very possible that motives of a quite different order should have determined the way in which things were connected and merged, or else, on the contrary, in which things were distinguished and opposed.

All types of affective elements unite in the representation made of it. Religious emotions, particularly, not just give it a unique trace, but provide it the most basic properties it is constituted of. Above all, things are sacred or profane, pure or impure, favourable or unfavourable, i.e., their most elemental characteristics are just expressions of the manner in which they influence the social sensibility. The differences and similarities that determine the fashion in which they are grouped are more affective than intellectual.

It has usually been stated that man began to consider things by relating them to himself. It enables us to see more accurately what this anthropocentrism, which may better be termed as sociocentrism, consists of. The individual is not the centre of the first schemes of nature; rather, it is the society. It is this which gets objectified, not man. Nothing proves this more noticeably than the manner in which the Sioux retain the whole universe, in a way, within the limits of tribal space. Also, we have seen how universal space itself is nothing else than the site occupied by the tribe, only indefinitely extended beyond its real limits. By the virtue of the same mental disposition, so many people have placed the centre of the world, 'the navel of the earth', in their own political or religious capital, i.e., at the place which is the centre of their moral life. Similarly, but in another order of ideas, the creative force of the universe and everything in it was initially conceived as a mythical ancestor, the generator of the society.

The classification of concepts is logical. Now a concept is the notion of a clearly determined group of things; its limits may be marked precisely. Emotion, on the contrary, is something essentially fluid and inconsistent. Its contagious influence spreads far beyond its point of origin, extending to everything about it, so that it is not possible to say where

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its power of propagation ends. The states of an emotional nature necessarily possess the same characteristic. It is not possible to say where they begin or where they end. They lose themselves in each other, and mingle their properties in such a way that they cannot be rigorously categorized. The pressure put forward by the group on all its members does not allow the individuals to freely evaluate the notions which society itself has elaborated, and in which it has placed something of its personality. These constructs are sacred for the individuals. So, the history of scientific classification is, in the final analysis, the history of the stages by which this element of social affectivity has progressively weakened, giving more and more room to the individuals for reflective thought. However, it is not the case that these distant influences which we have just studied have ceased to be felt presently. They have left behind them an effect that is surviving; it is the very cadre of all classification. It is the assembly of mental habits by virtue of which we envisage things and facts in the form of coordinated or hierarchical groups.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. State the characteristics of modern society.
5. Differentiate between negative and positive rights.
6. Differentiate between concept and emotion.

## 4.4 SUMMARY

- The heart of Durkheim's theory lies in his concept of social fact. Durkheim differentiated between two basic types of social facts—material and non-material.
- Durkheim's study of suicide is a good illustration of the significance of non-material social facts in his work. In his basic causal model, changes in non-material social facts ultimately cause differences in suicide rates.
- Durkheim differentiated among four types of suicide—egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic—and showed how each is affected by different changes in social currents.
- Durkheim was deeply offended by the Dreyfus affair, particularly its anti-Semitism. However, Durkheim did not attribute this anti-Semitism to racism among the French people.
- The basic feature of Durkheim's sociology is its steady foundation in a very substantial and definite epistemology. Actually, the intellectual career of the French sociologist was highlighted by the incessant effort to build a sociological science with a solid epistemological foundation (in fact, the epistemological concerns form the core of his research interests).
- The first major book of Durkheim was *De la division du travail social*, which was his doctoral thesis also and was highly influenced by Auguste Comte. The relation between individuals and the collective is the theme of this book which seeks to know 'how can a multiplicity of individuals achieve what is the condition of social existence namely a consensus?'
- Durkheim's best known book is his study of suicide. His aim in this book was not only to provide an account of suicide but also to illustrate how his methodology

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- could be applied to even the most individual of acts. Durkheim in this book showed that to what extent the individuals are determined by the collective reality.
- The various characteristics of modern society are social differentiation, organic solidarity, density of population, intensity of communications and the struggle for survival. All these phenomena should not be regarded as abnormal as they are related to the essence of modern society.
  - All sophisticated classifications are systems of hierarchized notions. Things are not simply arranged by themselves in the form of isolated groups, but these groups stand in fixed relationships to each other and together form a single whole. Moreover, these systems, like those of science, have a purely speculative purpose.

## 4.5 KEY TERMS

- **Totemism:** A belief in totems or in kinship through common affiliation to a totem
- **Rabbi:** A person trained in Jewish law, ritual, and tradition and ordained for leadership of a Jewish congregation, especially one serving as chief religious official of a synagogue
- **Proletariat:** The class of industrial wage earners who, possessing neither capital nor production means, must earn their living by selling their labour
- **Anthropology:** The scientific study of the origin, the behaviour, and the physical, social, and cultural development of humans
- **Moiety:** Either of two kinship groups based on unilateral descent that together make up a tribe or society
- **Sociocentrism:** The tendency to believe that one's ethnic or cultural group is centrally important, and that all other groups are measured in relation to one's own

## 4.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The two principles that can be clearly seen in Durkheim's sociology are as follows:
  - Sociology must be a science which has a methodology similar to the physical-natural sciences, that is, based on positivism.
  - The positivist science of society goes against philosophy and psychology.
2. Durkheim's division of labour differs from the concept of division of labour as defined by economists. The demarcation of occupations and multiplication of industrial activities stand for the social differentiation which took precedence according to Durkheim. The beginning of social differentiation signals the fall of mechanical solidarity and segmental structures.
3. According to the process of refutation, if we consider suicide to be contagion, then we would be able to see the geographical distribution of suicide as shown by areas that showed particularly high cases and where the suicide rate is higher and was spreading to other regions. But nothing of this sort is shown in the analyses on the geographical maps of suicide.
4. The following are the characteristics of the modern society:
  - Organic solidarity
  - Social differentiation

- Density of population
- Intensity of communication
- Struggle for survival

5. Negative rites are interdicts such as prohibition of eating or touching. They develop in the direction of all religious practices of asceticism. Positive rites, on the other hand, are rites of communion aimed at promoting procreation or reproduction.
6. A concept is the notion of a clearly determined group of things; its limits may be marked precisely. Emotion, on the contrary, is something essentially fluid and inconsistent. Its contagious influence spreads far beyond its point of origin, extending to everything about it, so that it is not possible to say where its power of propagation ends.

## 4.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

## Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a brief note on the early life of Durkheim.
2. What is the difference between repressive and restitutive law?
3. Write a short note on repressive law and collective consciousness.
4. State the concept of totemism in brief.

## Long-Answer Questions

1. Name the sociologist by whom Durkheim was influenced. Discuss various elements of this influence.
2. Describe how Durkheim relates to sociology as a science.
3. What is collective consciousness? Discuss its effects on the law.
4. What is the difference between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity? Describe with examples.
5. Explain the four types of suicides as described by Durkheim.
6. Describe the theoretical importance of religion in the elementary forms of religious life.

## 4.8 FURTHER READING

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