

**MA (Sociology)**  
**FIRST SEMESTER**  
**MASOC 401**



**INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**  
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**CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THINKERS**

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**PART-1**

**MA [Sociology]**

**First Semester**

**MASOC-401**



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



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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**

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## **Classical Sociological Thinkers**

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**Syllabi**

**Mapping in Book**

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**Emergence and Development of Sociology: Socio-Economic Force, Intellectual Context.**

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**Law of Three Stages, Positivism, Hierarchy of Sciences.**

**Unit III: Karl Marx-I**

**Dialectical Materialism, Materialistic Concept of History, Alienation**

**Unit IV: Karl Marx-II**

**Theory of Class Struggle, Theory of Capitalism.**



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# INTRODUCTION

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**NOTES**

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 classic sociological theories are still considered important and relevant.

Whereas the field of sociology itself and sociological theory by extension is relatively new, dating to 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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 it provides many answers, it also offers help in putting better questions and further developing research projects that can help better understand the 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.

Sociologists use empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop theories about human social activity. The goal of sociologists is to develop theories that will help explain the social world and make predictions about the future of the social world. The book *Classical Sociological Thinkers* discusses various classical and modern sociologists, their concepts of sociological evolution and the various theories they propounded.

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

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# UNIT 1 DEVELOPMENT OF CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGY

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## Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Emergence and Development of Sociology
  - 1.2.1 Socio-Economic Factors
  - 1.2.2 Intellectual Context for Sociology
- 1.3 Summary
- 1.4 Key Terms
- 1.5 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 1.6 Questions and Exercises
- 1.7 Further Reading

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Sociology is the study of human society or societies. However, such a simple initial definition of the subject poses the question, 'What is human society?' There is a difference of emphasis between the singular form of a society and its plural form. 'Society', as a singular term, appears general and unlimited. The plural term, 'societies', sounds more like a set of container units distinct from each other, such that you can take them one by one to inspect their contents.

In fact, sociology has always studied societies, both taken separately and together, as 'human societies'. The balance between the two aspects may vary, but in the end, the study of one absolutely requires the study of the other. Neither of them makes sense independently. For instance, considering India as a society, one can think of it in terms of cities, factories, schools, farms or prisons. One can also think of it in terms of politics, media or divinity. It is simple to connect all these factors. They can also be visualized as confined within the boundaries of the Indian states and referred under the general heading of 'Indian society'.

The development of culture, ways of acting, thinking and feeling makes human society a special case as compared with the societies of other species. These features are transmitted from one generation to the next and across societies through learning, not through inheritance. Culture includes language and technology, both of which involve the communication of ideas and the possibility of sophisticated coordination of action. This vastly enhances adaptability.

In this unit, you will learn about the context and forces that led to the emergence and development of sociology.

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## 1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Trace the emergence and development of sociology
- Identify the socio-economic forces in sociology
- Establish the intellectual context for sociology



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## 1.2 EMERGENCE 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 19th century, as a fundamentally new type of society emerged based on new principles of social organization and new ideas of enlightenment. This led to a change in the mind-sets 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 and 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 introduced the term 'sociology' in the year 1839. 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 social ill. He believed that sociology would lead to the further development of social sciences.

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 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.

### 1.2.1 Socio-Economic Factors

Social settings have a profound effect on shaping the intellectual fields. This is specifically true of sociology, which is not only derived from that setting but takes the social setting

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as its subject matter. We will briefly discuss some of the significant social conditions of the 19th century and early 20th century, which were of the supreme significance in the development of sociology.

### Political Revolutions

The long series of political revolutions ushering in the French Revolution of 1789 and then carrying over through the 20th century was the immediate factor responsible for the rise of sociological theorizing. These revolutions had enormous impact on many societies resulting in many positive changes. However, what caught the awareness of many early theorists was not the positive consequences, but the negative effects of these changes. These thinkers were disturbed by the resulting chaos and disorder, especially in France. They had a common desire to reinstate the social order. Some of the more intense thinkers of the age literally wanted a return to the peaceful and comparatively orderly days of the Middle Ages. However, more sophisticated thinkers felt that social change had made such a return almost impossible. These thinkers tried to find new bases of order in societies which had been changed by the political revolutions.

### French Revolution

The French revolution of 1789 in various aspects overshadowed the 19th century as a revolution which challenged and successfully dismantled the old social order. This revolution strengthened the state which aimed to represent the will of the people. Therefore, it is very crucial to recognize that the political and cultural climate which existed before the revolution was dominated by the monarchy and the church.

The abolishment of all religious order falls into Comte's theory that throughout history society has traversed through three discrete stages: theological, metaphysical and scientific. Comte believed that a country with religious order meant a theological approach that deemed the condition of society to be the God's will. The monarchy had always justified its position of power by emphasizing that the right to rule derives from God. In practice it meant that kings are answerable for their actions to God alone. By abolishing the monarchy and religious order, the revolution marked the move away from Comte's 'theological' stage.

The French citizens were provided new legal rights, a comprehensive centralized education system and a new inheritance system. These changes challenged the preceding traditional model, and hence provided to the individual citizens a different perspective of society. The study of this new perspective and the introduction of individual rights heralded the beginning of sociology as a discipline. It also confirmed the French revolution's tremendous influence on the field. Karl Marx, one of the major philosophical, economic and sociological personality of modern times, was tremendously influenced by the revolution of 1789. He expected that other similar revolutions elsewhere against feudal or oppressive societies will follow. When Marx's ideas ultimately were put into practice after the Russian revolution in October 1917, Leon Trotsky wrote an analysis of this event in terms of the French Revolution. Therefore it proves how this event still has relevance when studying social uprisings presently. There was a greater stress on the state as opposed to an established monarchy and church system. Consequently, a new social movement called 'nationalism' came into existence because some of the thinkers replaced allegiance to God and the monarchy with an allegiance to the state.

Nationalism had given rise to several uprisings since the French revolution (particularly National Socialism in Germany during the 1930's) and again gave people

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another perception of the society they are part of. It is pertinent because Nationalism is studied in depth in social scientific fields like anthropology and sociology presently.

### The Industrial Revolution

Industrial Revolution was at least as important as the French revolution in the shaping of sociological theory. It swept through many Western societies, mostly in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Industrial Revolution did not involve a single event but various interrelated developments which ended up transforming the Western world from a basically agricultural to a tremendously industrial system. Huge number of people left farms and agricultural work for the industrial occupation available in the mushrooming factories. These factories themselves were transformed by a long series of technological innovations and improvements. Huge economic bureaucracies came into being to provide various services required by industry and the upcoming capitalist economic system. In this economy, a free marketplace was most appropriate wherein the various products of an industrial system could be exchanged. Within this system, a few profited greatly while the majority worked long hours for low wages. A reaction against the industrial system and against capitalism in general followed and led to the labour movement as well as various radical movements aimed at overthrowing the capitalist system.

The Industrial Revolution, capitalism and the reaction against them all involved an enormous upheaval in Western society, an upheaval that affected sociologists greatly.

### The Rise of Socialism

One set of changes aimed at coping with the excesses of the industrial system and capitalism can be combined under the heading 'socialism'. Although some sociologists favoured socialism as a solution to industrial problems, most were personally and intellectually opposed to it. On the one side, Karl Marx was an active supporter of the overthrow of the capitalist system and its replacement by a socialist system. Although he did not develop a theory of socialism per se, he spent a great deal of time criticizing various aspects of capitalist society.

Most early theorists, such as Weber and Durkheim, were opposed to socialism (at least as it was envisioned by Marx). Although they recognized the problems within capitalist society, they sought social reform within capitalism rather than the social revolution argued for by Marx. They feared socialism more than they did capitalism. This fear played a far greater role in shaping sociological theory than did Marx's support of the socialist alternative to capitalism. In fact, as we will see, in many cases sociological theory developed in reaction against Marxian and, more generally, socialist theory.

### Urbanization

Partly as a result of the Industrial Revolution, a large number of people in the 19th century and 20th centuries were uprooted from their rural home and moved to urban settings. This massive migration was caused, in large parts, by the jobs created by the industrial system in the urban areas. However, it presented many difficulties for those people who had to adjust to urban life. In addition, the expansion of the cities produced a seemingly endless list of urban problems—overcrowding, pollution, noise, traffic and so forth.

The first major school of American sociology, the Chicago school, was in large part defined by its concern for the city and its interest in using Chicago as a laboratory in which to study urbanization and its problems.

## Religious Change

Social change brought on by political revolutions, the Industrial Revolution and urbanization had a profound effect on religiosity. Many early sociologists came from religious backgrounds and some were professionally involved with religion to improve social lives. They brought to sociology the same objectives as they had in their religious life. For such thinkers sociology was transformed into a religion. For others, their sociological theories bore an unmistakable religious imprint. Durkheim wrote one of his major works on religion. A large portion of Weber's work also was devoted to the religions of the world. However, Marx's orientation was far more critical.

### The Growth of Science

When sociological theory was being developed, there was an increasing emphasis on science in society as whole. As science was acquiring enormous prestige, those associated with most successful sciences (physics, biology and chemistry) were accorded honoured places in society. Sociologists (especially Comte and Durkheim) from the beginning were preoccupied with science, and many wanted to model sociology after the successful physical and biological sciences. However, a debate soon developed between those who wholeheartedly accepted the scientific model and those (such as Weber) who thought that distinctive characteristics of social life made a wholesale adaptation of scientific model difficult.

### The Enlightenment and the Founding of Sociology in France

Many observers believe that the Enlightenment constitutes a critical development in terms of the later evolution of sociology. Reason became the God of these philosophers who were enormously inspired by the scientific achievements of the preceding centuries. Truth became the central goal of the intellectuals of this age; but not the truth founded on revelation, tradition or authority. Instead, it was the reason and observations that were to be the twin pillars of truth. The prevailing institutions were contrary to human nature and thus inhibitive of their growth and development. Unreasonable institutions prevented men from realizing their potential. Therefore, these thinkers waged constant war against the irrational and criticism became their major weapon.

They fought what they considered to be superstition, bigotry or intolerance; they struggled against censorship and demanded freedom of thought; they attacked the prerogatives of the feudal classes and their restraints upon the industrial and commercial classes; and finally, they tried to secularize ethics. They were very knowledgeable about the positive intellectual achievements up to their time, but they were also critical, sceptical and secular. Basically, it was their faith in reason and science which provided so strong an impetus to their work and led them to become humanitarian, optimistic and confident.

The 18th-century thinkers had lost faith in the closed and self-sufficient metaphysical systems of the preceding century; they had lost patience with a philosophy confined to definite immutable axioms and deductions from them.

Investigations and inquiries are emphasized. Enlightenment thought is not merely reflective, nor is it satisfied to deal solely with axiomatic truths. It attributes to thought a creative and critical function. Philosophy is no longer merely a matter of abstract thinking; it acquires the practical function of criticizing existing institutions to show that they are unreasonable and unnatural. It demands that these institutions and the entire old order be replaced by a new one that is more reasonable, natural and hence necessary.

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And the fulfilment of the new order is the demonstration of this truth. Enlightenment thinking, then, has a negative and critical as well as a positive side. It is not so much the particular doctrines, axioms and theorems which lend it a new and original quality; rather, it is the process of criticizing, doubting and tearing down as well as building up. The unity of the 'negative' and 'positive' tendencies is eventually split and after the French revolutions they manifest themselves as separate and conflicting philosophical principles.

### The Mind of the Enlightenment

For the enlightenment thinkers, all aspects of an individual's life and works were subject to critical examination—various types of sciences, religious revelation, metaphysics, aesthetics, etc. These thinkers felt and sensed the mighty forces impelling them along, but they refused to abandon themselves to these forces.

Self-examination, understanding of their own activity, their own society and their own time was an essential function of thought. By knowing, understanding and recognizing the main forces and tendencies of their epoch, individuals could determine the direction and control the consequences of these forces. Through reason and science man could attain ever greater degrees of freedom and, therefore, ever greater degrees of perfection. Intellectual progress, an idea that permeated the thinking of that age, was to serve constantly to further man's general progress.

They turned not to Descartes but primarily to Newton, whose method was not pure deduction but analysis. Newton was interested in 'facts' and the data of experience. His principles, the goal of his investigation, rested to a significant degree on experience and observation, i.e., the empirical basis.

Newton's research was based on the assumption of universal order and law in the material world. Facts are not a chaotic, haphazard jumble of separate elements; quite to the contrary, they appear to fall into patterns and exhibit definite forms, regularities and relationships. Newton believed that order is imminent in the universe and is discovered not by abstract principles but by observation and compilation of data. This is the methodology most characteristic of 18th-century thought, and it is this emphasis which distinguishes it from that of the 17th-century Continental philosophers.

Condillac, for example, in his *Treatise on Systems* (basing himself on Locke), explicitly justifies this methodology and criticizes the great systems of the 17th century for having failed to adhere to it. Facts, the phenomena of the real world, were, for all practical purposes, ignored by the 17th century rationalists. Single ideas and concepts were elevated to the status of dogma.

The rational spirit dominated knowledge completely. Thus Condillac argues the necessity for a new method which unites the 'positive' and scientific as well as the rational. One must study the phenomena themselves if their immanent forms and connection are to be known. Condillac, D'Alembert and others now call for this new method as a prerequisite to intellectual progress.

By observing the actual practice of science, the synthesis of the 'positive' and the 'rational' was not an unattainable ideal but the one fully realizable. The natural sciences were proving themselves; their progress could be clearly perceived as the result of the triumphant march of the new scientific method. In the course of a century and a half, science had made a number of significant advances and then with Newton a truly qualitative step forward: the complex multiplicity of natural phenomena was reduced to, and comprehended as, the workings of a single universal law. This was an impressive victory for the new method.

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Newton's general law of attraction was not the exclusive result of theorizing nor of sporadic experimentation or observation unguided by theory; its discovery was the fruit of the rigorous application of the scientific method.

Newton completed what others had begun. Newton retained, used and substantiated the method employed before him by Kepler and Galileo, the main feature of which was the interdependence of its analytical and synthetic aspects. Here was a magnificent triumph of reason and observation—the new method which takes observed facts and advances an interpretation which accounts for what is observed, so that if the interpretation is correct it can guide observer in their quest for new facts.

What is new and original about Enlightenment thought, therefore, is the wholehearted adoption of the methodological pattern of Newton's physics. What is even more important for our consideration of the philosophical foundations of sociological theory is the fact that immediately with its adoption it was generalized and employed in realms other than the mathematical and physical ones. It became an indispensable tool in the study of all phenomena. Here again this may be contrasted with the 17th-century rationalist understanding of the term 'reason'. For Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, to select the most typical thinkers of that period, reason was the realm of 'eternal verities'—truth held in common by individuals and God.

Reason bows neither to the merely factual, the simple data of experience; nor to the 'evidence' of revelation, tradition or authority. Reason together with observation is a facility for the acquisition of truth. The change did indeed become increasingly manifest. An analysis was now applied to psychological and even sociological phenomena and problems. In these realms too it had become clear that reason is a powerful instrument when employed in that special method—analysis into separate elements as well as synthetic reconstruction.

It should be clear, then, why the Enlightenment is a most logical point of departure if one is interested in the origins of sociological theory. It is in that period that one may see more consistently than before the emergence of the scientific method. Reason in itself will not yield knowledge of reality; neither observation and nor experimentation alone yield such knowledge.

Knowledge of reality, whether natural or social, depends on the unity of reason and observation in the scientific method. The enlightenment thinkers were as interested in society and history as they were in nature, and these were treated as an indivisible unity. By studying nature—including the nature of man—one could learn not only about what is, but about what is possible.

Likewise, by studying society and history one could learn not only about the workings of the existing factual order, but about its inherent possibilities as well. These thinkers were 'negative' in that they were always critical of the existing order which, in their view, stifled an individual's potential and did not allow the 'possible' to emerge from the 'is'. The existing factual order was studied scientifically by these thinkers in order to learn how to transcend it.

### Conservative Reaction to the Enlightenment

The theorist who was most directly and positively influenced by Enlightenment thinking was Karl Marx, but he formed his early theoretical ideas in Germany. On the surface, we might think that French classical sociological theory, like Marx's theory, was directly and positively influenced by the Enlightenment. 'The ideology of the counter-Enlightenment



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represented a virtual inversion of Enlightenment liberalism. In place of modernist premises, we can detect in the Enlightenment critics a strong antimodernist sentiment.'

The most extreme form of opposition to Enlightenment ideas was French Catholic counter-revolutionary philosophy, as represented by the ideas of Louis De Bonald (1754–1840) and Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821). These men were reacting against not only the Enlightenment but also the French Revolution, which they saw partly as a product of the kind of thinking characteristic of the Enlightenment. De Bonald, for example, was disturbed by the revolutionary changes and yearned for a return to the peace and harmony of the Middle Ages. In this view, God was the source of society; therefore, reason, which was so important to the Enlightenment philosophers, was seen as inferior to traditional religious beliefs. Furthermost, it was believed that because God had created society, people should not tamper with it and should not try to change a holy creation.

The conservative turned away from what they considered to be the 'naïve' nationalism of the Enlightenment. They not only recognized the irrational aspects of social life but also assigned them positive value. Thus they regarded such phenomena as tradition, imagination, emotionalism and religion as useful and necessary components of social life. In that they disliked upheaval and sought to retain the existing order, they deplored developments such as French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, which they saw as descriptive forces. The conservatives tended to emphasize social order, an emphasis that became one of the central themes of the work of several sociological thinkers.

### 1.2.2 Intellectual Context for 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 sociology 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, cooperation, 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 the 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

**Check Your Progress**

1. Who introduced the term 'sociology' and when?
2. How did the French Revolution help French citizens?
3. What were the views of Weber and Durkheim regarding socialism as an alternative to capitalism?
4. What was the key to the period of Enlightenment?

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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
- (ii) Synthetic school

#### Formal School

The formal school defined sociology as a social science that has definite characteristics. This school was advocated by German sociologists, George Simmel, Ferdinand Tonnies, Alfred Vierkandt and Leopold Von Wiese. On the other hand, the synthetic school with French sociologist Durkheim, British politician and sociologist Leonard T. Hobhouse and Russian-American Pitirim Alexandrovich 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 the 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 human society:

- (i) Associative processes that are related to contact, approach, adaptation, etc.
- (ii) Disassociate processes like competition and conflict.

Additionally, a blend of associative and dissociative 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 of 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 focussed 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.

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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 focusses 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.

### 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—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 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. Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse, a British sociologist, defined sociology as a field of science which focusses 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:** This provides a methodical review of the main factors of coexistence, such that they are evident in every kind of society.
- **Historical sociology:** This 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 the general features from the 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 combined the main features of sociology in a way that they classified 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 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 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. French philosopher Auguste Comte and English philosopher Herbert Spencer were pioneers among 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 focussing 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 survived because it was useful to the society.

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

- (i) **The 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 the 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.
- (ii) **The comparative method:** This was considered to be the fundamental method in sociology for a long time. It was first used by evolutionary sociologists, but its use did not involve a necessary commitment to an evolutionary approach. Durkheim, in the *Rules of Sociological Method*,

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explains 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 and establish 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.

(iii) **The 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.

(iv) **The formal or systematic method:** Formal or systematic sociology represented a reaction against the evolutionary and encyclopaedic science of early sociologists. Its originator was George Simmel and it remained largely a German approach to sociology. Simmel argued 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.

(v) **The structural method:** The French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss proposed the structural method in the 1950s. According to Edmund Leach, 'Lévi-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'. According to the structural method, meaning is produced and reproduced within a culture through various practices, phenomena and activities that serve as systems of signification. The structuralist method analyses activities that are as different as food-preparation and serving rituals, religious rites, games, literary and non-literary texts, and so on, to determine the deep structures by which meaning is produced and reproduced within the culture. Lévi-Strauss examined cultural phenomena including mythology, kinship, and food preparation. In addition to these examinations, Lévi-Strauss produced more linguistically focused writings in which he applied the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's difference between langue and parole in his search for the fundamental structures of the human mind, arguing that the structures that form the 'deep grammar' of society are found in the human mind and function in individuals unconsciously.

Check Your Progress

5. How was sociology defined by two schools of thought, pertaining to its range and theme?
6. How did Simmel define sociology?
7. What were the three divisions of sociology according to Durkheim?
8. What is comparative sociology?

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1.3 SUMMARY

- 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 is interested in social relationships, not because they are economic, political, religious, legal or educational, but because they are social at the same time.
- Social settings have a profound effect on shaping the intellectual fields. This is specifically true of sociology, which is not only derived from that setting but takes the social setting as its subject matter.
- The long series of political revolutions ushering in the French Revolution of 1789 and then carrying over through the 20th century was the immediate factor responsible for the rise of sociological theorizing. These revolutions had enormous impact on many societies resulting in many positive changes.
- The abolishment of all religious order falls into Comte's theory that throughout history society has traversed through three discrete stages: theological, metaphysical and scientific. Comte believed that a country with religious order meant a theological approach that deemed the condition of society to be the God's will.
- Industrial Revolution was at least as important as the French revolution in the shaping of sociological theory. It swept through many Western societies, mostly in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Industrial Revolution did not involve a single event but various interrelated developments which ended up transforming the Western world from a basically agricultural to a tremendously industrial system.
- One set of changes aimed at coping with the excesses of the industrial system and capitalism can be combined under the heading 'socialism'. Although some sociologists favoured socialism as a solution to industrial problems, most were personally and intellectually opposed to it.
- When sociological theory was being developed, there was an increasing emphasis on science in society as whole. As science was acquiring enormous prestige, those associated with most successful sciences (physics, biology and chemistry) were accorded honoured places in society.
- 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—social morphology, social physiology and general sociology.

1.4 KEY TERMS

- **Society:** A society can be best explained as a web of social relationships. It can also be said that a society is a group of people with common territory, interaction, and culture.
- **Urbanization:** It is a population shift from rural to urban areas, "the gradual increase in the proportion of people living in urban areas", and the ways in which each society adapts to the change.



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- **Industrial Revolution:** The Industrial Revolution was the transition to new manufacturing processes in the period from about 1760 to sometime between 1820 and 1840.
- **Socialism:** Socialism is a social and economic system characterised by social ownership of the means of production and co-operative management of the economy, as well as a political theory and movement that aims at the establishment of such a system.
- **Systematic sociology:** This provides a methodical review of the main factors of coexistence, such that they are evident in every kind of society.
- **Historical sociology:** This deals with the historical array and existence of general forms of the society.

### 1.5 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Auguste Comte introduced the term 'sociology' in the year 1839. He was a French philosopher and sociologist.
2. The French citizens were provided new legal rights, a comprehensive centralized education system and a new inheritance system. These changes challenged the preceding traditional model, and hence provided to the individual citizens a different perspective of society.
3. Most early theorists, such as Weber and Durkheim, were opposed to socialism (at least as it was envisioned by Marx). Although they recognized the problems within capitalist society, they sought social reform within capitalism rather than the social revolution argued for by Marx.
4. Reason became the God of the philosophers who were enormously inspired by the scientific achievements of the preceding centuries. Truth became the central goal of the intellectuals of this age; but not the truth founded on revelation, tradition or authority. Instead, it was the reason and observations that were to be the twin pillars of truth.
5. Sociology was defined differently by two schools of thought, pertaining to its range and theme:
  - (i) Formal school
  - (ii) Synthetic school
6. Simmel defined sociology as a specific social science that describes, organizes, analyses and visually explains the forms of social relationships.
7. Durkheim divided sociology into three main sections—social morphology, social physiology and general sociology.
8. Comparative sociology basically deals with identical historical changes and tries to highlight the general features by comparing them. It also separates the general features from the industrial features.

### 1.6 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

#### Short-Answer Questions

1. When did sociology emerge as a science and how?
2. What is the main focus of sociology?

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3. What are the principles of the functionalist method?
4. How did Enlightenment contribute to the growth of society and its study?
5. What was the conservative response to Enlightenment?

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the formal school of sociology and its criticism among sociological thinkers.
2. How did the Industrial Revolution take place and what was its significance to sociology?
3. Discuss the mind of the Enlightenment.

### 1.7 FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 2 AUGUSTE COMTE

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### Structure

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

### NOTES

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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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.

In this unit, you will learn about the sociological theories propounded by Auguste Comte.

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### 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the law of three stages as propounded by Comte
- Discuss positivism as explained by Comte
- Examine hierarchy of sciences as given by Comte

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### 2.2 LAW OF THREE STAGES

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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 fourteen 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 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 Polytechnic, but, in 1844, he wrote a scathing attack 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, 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.

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.

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The law of human progress or the law of three stages, as it is alternatively known, is Comte's one of 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-believe 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

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. It is clear that theological state implies a belief in divine and extra-terrestrial 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, or a 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.



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- **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 advanced 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 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 the 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.

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.

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.

1. **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.
2. **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 classes of facts.

The distinction between social statics and dynamics is not between two classes 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, *statics*, *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 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

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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.

### 2.3 POSITIVISM

Comte saw a 'deplorable state of anarchy' in his time, and he believed that his 'social physics', bearing directly upon the 'principal needs and grievances of society would help bring order out of chaos'. He hoped to call this science to the attention of statesmen who profess to devote themselves to the task of resolving the alarming revolutionary constitution of modern societies. Social and moral anarchy are the result of intellectual anarchy, itself a consequence of the fact that, on the one hand, theological metaphysical philosophy has declined and, on the other, positive philosophy has not yet reached the point where it can provide an intellectual basis for a new organization and thus deliver society from the peril of dissolution. Order and progress, which the ancients thought irreconcilable, must be united once and for all. Comte considered it the great misfortune of his time that the two principles were regarded as contradictory and were represented by opposing political parties.

What he called the retrograde party was for order while the anarchical party was for progress. The principle of order was derived from the catholic-feudal, or theological, state of social philosophy, whose exponents were Ronald, Maistre, et al. The principle of progress, on the other hand, was derived from the critical tendencies of the Reformation and The Enlightenment. Existing social classes, much to Comte's chagrin, tended to polarize and to support either one or the other.

Hence, class conflict, disorder and anarchy. In every crisis, the retrograde party argued that the problem was due to the destruction of the old order and therefore demanded its complete restoration; the anarchical party, in contrast, argued that the trouble stemmed from the fact that the destruction of the old order was incomplete, and, therefore, that the revolution must continue. Comte appreciated certain aspects of the feudal-theological order and did not reject it altogether. True, it had become 'pernicious' by outliving its usefulness, but it had facilitated the development of modern society. Since, however, it can no longer hold its own before the natural progress of scientific intelligence and other social changes, the theological polity can never again become the basis of social order. Thus Comte, unlike Ronald, believed it was impossible to restore the old order. The decline of the old is not temporary; neither is it the work of Providence. Somehow, Comte argues, a synthesis of the opposing ideas, order and progress, must be achieved, because only through intellectual unity and harmony can social unity be restored.

Science and industry were the main causes of the decline of the feudal theological order, and the rise of the scientific spirit now precludes the restoration of that order; likewise with the industrial spirit, which now prevents the recurrence of the feudal-military spirit. Moreover, the new spirit is so strong that the spokesmen for the theological school are themselves infected with it. The principles of the 'metaphysicians', Comte's term for the Enlightenment thinkers, were essentially critical and revolutionary. They contributed to progress but only in a negative sense. The metaphysical stage was necessary because it broke for the next stage the positive one which will put an end to

#### Check Your Progress

1. Which incident in Comte's life served as a turning point for his philosophical career?
2. What were Comte's views on sociology?
3. What is ontogeny?
4. Which is the second stage of the evolution of human mind?
5. What forms the basis of all human associations, as per Comte?

the revolutionary period by the formation of a social order uniting the principles of order and progress. The metaphysical spirit was necessary to direct the struggle and organize the maximum energy for the overthrow of the great ancient system. But, it, too, has outlived its usefulness and has become obstructive. Social reorganization requires intellectual reorganization, and this is impossible so long as individuals have the right of inquiry on subjects above their qualifications. Comte insists that unity and unanimity will be essential in the new organic society.

#### The Advent of Positive Philosophy

Comte had great confidence in the ascendancy of the positive doctrine. Positive philosophy, he believed, is undoubtedly superior to its predecessors. For while the metaphysical school condemned all periods prior to the Revolution, and the retrograde school disparaged the whole of the modern era, only the positive principle is able to recognize 'the fundamental law of continuous human development, representing the existing evolution as the necessary result of the gradual series of former transformations, by simply extending to social phenomena the spirit which governs the treatment of all other natural phenomena'. We must let Comte speak for himself to demonstrate the degree to which he advanced his positive doctrine with one purpose in mind to avert revolution and to achieve the resignation of the 'multitude' to the conditions of the existing order. He explicitly pushes to the extreme some of the conclusions which were only implicit in Saint-Simon's work and purges from that work every last critical element that might have remained. It is only by the positive polity that the revolutionary spirit can be restrained because by it alone can the influence of the critical doctrine be justly estimated and circumscribed under the rule of the positive spirit again. All the difficult and delicate questions which now keep up a perpetual irritation in the bosom of society, and which can never be settled while mere political solutions are proposed, will be scientifically estimated, to the great furtherance of social peace.

At the same time, it (the positive polity) will be teaching society that, in the present state of their ideas, no political change can be of supreme importance, while the perturbation attending change is supremely mischievous, in the way both of immediate hindrance, and of diverting attention from the true need and procedure. Again, the positive spirit tends to consolidate order, by the rational development of a wise resignation to incurable political evils. A true resignation, that is, a permanent disposition to endure, steadily and without hope of compensation, all inevitable evils, can proceed only from a deep sense of the connection of all kinds of natural phenomena with invariable laws. If there are political evils which, like some personal sufferings, cannot be remedied by science, science at least proves to us that they are incurable, so as to calm our restlessness under pain by the conviction that it is by natural laws that they are rendered insurmountable.

Human nature suffers in its relations with the astronomical world, and the physical, chemical and biological, as well as the political one. How is it that we turbulently resist in the last case, while, in the others, we are calm and resigned? Finally, the positive philosophy befriends public order by bringing back men's understanding to a normal state through the influence of its method alone, before it has had time to establish any social theory. It dissipates disorder at once by imposing a series of indisputable scientific conditions on the study of political questions. By including social science in the scientific hierarchy, the positive spirit admits to success in this study only well-prepared and disciplined minds, so trained in the preceding departments of knowledge as to be fit for the complex problems of the last.

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The positive conception of progress is superior to all others, and especially superior to the revolutionary view in which progress consists of the continuous extension of freedom, and the gradual expansion of human powers. The scientific elite will be the final authority on what these laws are and will indicate the degree to which the lot of the lower classes may be slowly improved. In this way the positive doctrine will provide a so-called constructive alternative to the insurrectionary solution advocated by the revolutionary school. Basic economic and political institutions are not to be changed, for history has shown that such change avails nothing. Class structure should remain as it is; and class conflict presumably will be reduced, even eliminated, through the moral reconciliation of the classes. This will be facilitated by imposing a moral authority between the working classes and the leaders of society.

Order and progress are the static and dynamic aspects of a society. Order refers to the harmony which prevails among the various conditions of existence, while progress refers to the society's orderly development according to natural social laws. Thus the two principles, previously mutually antagonistic, are reconciled. It is natural and normal for the elements of the social system, the institutions of society, to be interdependent and interrelated. Therefore, even for analytical purposes social elements should not be contemplated separately as if they had an independent existence. All the parts of the system make up a harmonious whole, which, by definition, is divested of all-conflictive, contradictory and antagonistic elements. He enunciates as a scientific principle 'that there must always be a spontaneous harmony between the whole and the parts of the social system'. But harmony will establish itself through radical consensus, the only condition proper to the social organism. Emphasis is always on adjustment to the 'natural' social laws, quite deliberately opposed to Enlightenment principles where the emphasis is on changing the social system to allow for the infinite perfection of man. Again and again Comte stresses that the scientific method requires that society be studied as a whole and not separated into its component parts.

It is as if he fears that the logical analysis of a society's institutions will inevitably lead to its actual dissolution. Social dynamics refers to the study of the patterns of evolutionary progress in which the sequences of development are necessary and inevitable. Social dynamics, then, is really 'dynamic order' proceeding according to natural, orderly and necessary laws.

The tendency towards improvement is spontaneous, and therefore does not require any special political action directed towards change. The latter is in effect 'superfluous', because each stage is as perfect as it can be. Not only political action but human action in general is very limited in its effects and subject to the constriction of natural laws. The human race could perhaps accelerate or retard certain tendencies but never change the nature of those tendencies. It certainly cannot reverse certain orders of development nor can it skip stages.

The importance of human action, in general, and political action, in particular, has been greatly exaggerated. He emphasized such techniques as observation, experiment and comparison. And in spite of the transparent ideological elements of his methodology, he does manage to grasp some of the principles of scientific method which always remains subordinated, however, to the construction of his hierarchical, organic, authoritarian society.

Observation is impossible without theory, first to direct it and then to interpret, that is, observed facts cannot speak for themselves. Facts must be attached at least by

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a tentative hypothesis to the laws of social development. But for Comte, as we seen, these laws as well as all his assumptions and concepts about society were in the first instance inspired by their ideological function. The whole apparatus of his positive doctrine is ideological in the strictest sense of that term, and science never achieves very much autonomy in his doctrinaire and totalitarian system. He remained blind throughout his work to the ideal of freedom even as it related to science and apparently failed to see how many aspects of society he had dogmatically closed off from the view of science by means of his doctrinaire pronouncements.

As Comte proceeds in his exposition of social statics, he takes into consideration the individual, the family and society. He stated that the family, not the individual, is the true social unit; for the family is the school of social life. Man is a social being whose social nature is formed in the family context.

But these assertions and the like are always made with a specific ideological intention in mind. The subordination of woman is natural and will continue in the 'new' society: The female sex is in a state of perpetual infancy. 'Sociology will prove that the equality of the sexes, of which so much is said, is incompatible with all social existence.' Thus Comte argues the organic inferiority of woman and attempts to provide a 'scientific' rationale for the same state of affairs that the theological school regarded as determined by Providence.

Generally, 'providential wisdom', though in a secularized form, dominates Comte's conception of society and its development. The changes brought about by the inherent wisdom of the spontaneous evolutionary process are always 'superior to any that the most eminent reformers would have ventured to conceive of beforehand'. Nevertheless, there are developments which, though natural, can threaten the very existence of society, particularly its consensus and solidarity. Comte views the division of labour, growing increasingly complex, in this light. It seems to be an inexorable process, the very principle of society's development; but at the same time as the division of labour is extended, it seems to decompose and fragment society. Thus government is assigned the role 'to guard against and restrain the fundamental dispersion of ideas, sentiments and ideals, which is the inevitable result of the very principle of human development, and which, if left to itself, would put a stop to social progression in all important respects. Every element and institution of the society, including government, must serve to further stability, solidarity and order. Society is everything in Comte's scheme; the individual is nothing.

## 2.4 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 pass from one stage to the next, evolving in 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 developments of the sciences that came before it in a hierarchy marked by the law of increasing complexity.

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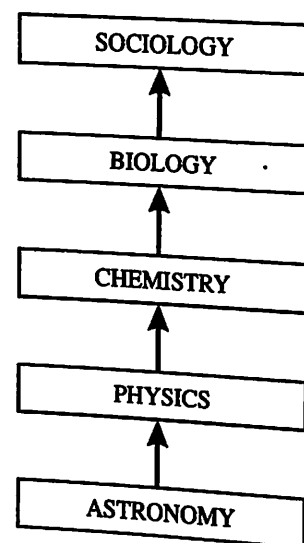


Fig. 2.1 Hierarchy of Sciences

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.

2.5 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. He 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.

Check Your Progress

6. Where was the principle of progress derived from?
7. What were the main causes of the decline of the feudal theological order?
8. What does order in a society refer to?

- 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.
- Social dynamics observed as to how the present social laws are affecting the society. It is also evaluates the social structure. Social statics also studies the correlation between various social facts.

2.6 KEY TERMS

- **Fetishism:** A belief that there is some living spirit in non-living objects.
- **Polytheism:** Stage where man had classified god and every natural force had a presiding deity.
- **Monotheism:** Belief that one God is supreme and that he is responsible for the maintenance of order and system in the world.

2.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Comte attempted suicide by throwing himself into the river 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.
2. 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.
3. Comte 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.
4. 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.
5. Family is 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.
6. The principle of progress was derived from the critical tendencies of the Reformation and The Enlightenment. Existing social classes, much to Comte's chagrin, tended to polarize and to support either one or the other.
7. Science and industry were the main causes of the decline of the feudal theological order, and the rise of the scientific spirit now precludes the restoration of that order; likewise with the industrial spirit, which now prevents the recurrence of the feudal-military spirit. Moreover, the new spirit is so strong that the spokesmen for the theological school are themselves infected with it.

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8. Order and progress are the static and dynamic aspects of a society. Order refers to the harmony which prevails among the various conditions of existence, while progress refers to the society's orderly development according to natural social laws.

## 2.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

### Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a note on Comte's early life.
2. How is sociology moving towards definite science?
3. List the various stages in the theological state.
4. What do you understand by social dynamics?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. 'Sociology is a scientific study of society'. Discuss.
2. Analyse the hierarchy of science.
3. Discuss Comte's idea of human progress.

## 2.9 FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 3 KARL MARX -I

### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Dialectical Materialism
- 3.3 Materialistic Conception of History
  - 3.3.1 Stages of Human History
  - 3.3.2 Modes of Production and Practical Aspects of Historical Materialism
  - 3.3.3 An Assessment of Historical Materialism
  - 3.3.4 Alienation
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 Key Terms
- 3.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.7 Questions and Exercises
- 3.8 Further Reading

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## 3.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you studied the theories of Auguste Comte. In this unit, you will learn about Marx's conception of the dialectical approach which he derived from Hegel and which in fact shaped all of Marx's work.

As a student of sociology, you must have heard the name of Karl Marx. The thoughts of this philosopher and revolutionary had a huge impact on the history of the twentieth century; in fact, his writings continue to influence thinkers of political science, economy, history, etc., to this day. Despite his political orientation towards the creation of a communist society, Marx devoted much of his writings to the dialectical and critical analyses of capitalist society. The dialectic emphasizes that among the elements of social world there are no simple cause and effect relationships; fact and value are not seemingly divided clearly between a line; there are no hard and fast dividing lines among phenomena in the social world. Marx's analysis of actors and structure should be viewed in the framework of his opinions on human nature, which is also the starting point for his critical analysis of the contradictions inherent within the capitalist structure. Marx stated that a disagreement exists between our human nature and work in the capitalist system. Workers get alienated from their labour because it does not belong to them, but rather to the capitalist owners.

Marx's theories and opinions were a response to the quick changes taking place in Europe, primarily Germany, as a result of industrialization. He also studied the nature of the structures of capitalism and their adverse effects on the actors and elaborated on the pivotal role played by commodities in capitalism. He used the term 'reification' to explain the process whereby social structure becomes naturalised, absolute and independent of human action. In this context, it can be said that capital is the most reified component in a capitalist society.

### 3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss Marx's concept of dialectical materialism
- Explain Marx's materialistic conception of history
- Analyse the theory of alienation as given by Marx
- Discuss theory of class struggle
- Describe the theory of capitalism

### 3.2 DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Karl Marx was born in Trier, Prussia, on 15 May 1818. His father, a lawyer, provided the family with a fairly typical middle class existence. Both parents were from rabbinical families, but for business reasons, Marx's father had converted to Lutheranism.

In 1841, Marx received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Berlin. The University of Berlin at that time was a school heavily influenced by Hegel and the young Hegelians, who were supportive, yet critical, of their master. Marx's doctorate was a dry philosophical treatise that bore little resemblance to his later, more radical and more pragmatic work. After graduation Marx became a writer for a liberal-radical newspaper and within 10 months became its editor-in-chief. However, because of its political position, the paper was closed shortly thereafter by the government. The early essays that Marx published during this period began to reflect a number of standpoints that would guide Marx throughout his life. These essays were liberally sprinkled with democratic principles, humanism and idealism. Marx rejected the abstractness of Hegelian philosophy, the naïveté and dreams of utopian communists, and those activists who were urging what he considered to be premature political action. In rejecting these activists, Marx laid the groundwork for his own life's work:

Practical attempts, even by the masses, can be answered with cannon as soon as they become dangerous, but ideas that overcome our conviction, ideas to which reason has riveted our conscience, are chains from which one cannot break loose without breaking one's heart; they are demons that one can only overcome by submitting to them. (Marx, 1842/1977:20)

Marx married in 1843 and soon thereafter left Germany for the more liberal atmosphere of Paris. There Marx continued to grapple with the ideas of Hegel and the young Hegelians, but he also encountered two new sets of ideas—French socialism and English political economy. It was the unique way in which he combined Hegelianism, socialism and political economy that shaped his intellectual orientation. At this time he also met the man who was to become his friend, benefactor and collaborator—Friedrich Engels. The son of a textile manufacturer, Engels had become a socialist who was extremely critical of the conditions facing the working class. Much of Marx's compassion for the misery of the working class came from his exposure to Engels and his ideas. During this period Marx produced academic works—many of which were unpublished in his lifetime—*The Holy Family* and *The German ideology*. Marx also produced *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* which better integrated all of the intellectual tradition in which he was immersed and which foreshadowed his increasing preoccupation with the economic domain.

While Marx and Engels shared a theoretical orientation, there were many differences between the two men. Marx tended to be a highly abstract thinker, a disorderly intellectual who was very oriented towards his family. On the other hand, Engels was a practical thinker who was a neat and tidy businessman.

They collaborated on books, articles and worked together in radical organisations. Engels even helped and supported Marx throughout the rest of his life so that Marx could devote himself to his intellectual and political endeavours.

In spite of the close association of the names of Marx and Engels, Engels made it clear that he was the junior partner. He once stated:

Marx could very well have done without me. What Marx accomplished, I would not have achieved. Marx stood higher, saw farther and took a wider and quicker view than the rest of us. Marx was a genius. (Engels, cited in McLellan, 1973:w131-132)

Many theorists believe that Engels failed to understand many of the subtleties of Marx's work. After Marx's death, Engels became the leading spokesperson for Marxian theory and in various ways distorted and oversimplified it.

Since some of his writings had upset the Prussian government, the French government (at the request of the Prussians) expelled Marx in 1845, because of which he moved to Brussels. His radicalism was growing, and he had become an active member of the international revolutionary movement. He was also associated with the Communist League and was asked to write a document (with Engels) expounding its aims and beliefs. The result was Marx's most famous work *The Communist Manifesto* published in 1848, a work that was characterized by ringing political slogans, which today is recognised to be the most influential political manuscript ever written.

In 1849, Marx moved to London, and, in light of the failure of the political revolutions of 1848, he began to withdraw from active revolutionary activity and to move into serious and detailed research on the working conditions under capitalism. These studies ultimately resulted in the three volumes of *Capital*, the first of which was published in 1867 while the other two were published posthumously. He lived in poverty during these years, barely managing to survive on a small income from his writings and the support of Engels. In 1863, Marx became re-involved in political activity by joining the *International*, an international movement of workers. He soon gained dominance within the movement and devoted a number of years to it. He began to gain fame both as a leader of the *International* and as the author of *Capital*. But the disintegration of the *International* by 1876, the failure of various revolutionary movements, and personal illness took their toll on Marx. Marx died on 14 March 1883 with his friends and family burying his body in London. Marx's tombstone bears the message 'Workers of All Lands Unite', which is the final line of *The Communist Manifesto*.

Although Marx himself never used the term, many Marxists consider Dialectical Materialism as the theoretical source of several strands of Marxism. Joseph Dietzgen first used the term in 1887; however, it was only after Georgi Plekhanov—the father of Russian Marxism—used the term that it became a part of common usage in Marxian analysis.

Dialectical Materialism refers to the societal and economic transformation born of material forces. Essentially, the concept of dialectical materialism suggests that all historical growth and change results from the struggle of opposites. To put it another way, history is the creation of class struggle, i.e., the class struggle between the capitalist and landowning classes, on the one hand, and the proletariat and peasantry, on the other.

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Dialectical Materialism or 'diamat' follows the Hegelian principle of philosophy of history, which is the growth of thesis into anti-thesis that is sublated by synthesis. This synthesis preserves the thesis and the anti-thesis and simultaneously rises above them both.

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**Law of Dialectics**

Marxism is a fundamentally materialist philosophy because its foundation is the belief that the overall account of everything is matter which is the characteristic of reality. Another important aspect of Marxian analysis is the belief that matter is independent in forming the course of nature which detaches dialectical materialism.

According to Engels, 'All nature, from the smallest thing to the biggest, from a grain of sand to the sun, from the Protista to man, is in a constant state of coming into being and going out of being, in a constant flux, in a ceaseless state of movement and change.' Thus, the fundamental suggestion of dialectics is that everything is in a continuous process of change, motion and development. Even when there is an appearance that no change is taking place, actually, matter is always changing. Molecules, atoms and subatomic particles are always on the move, continually changing place. Therefore, dialectics is essentially a dynamic understanding of the phenomena and processes which occur at all levels of both organic and inorganic matter.

Using Hegel's *Science of Logic*, Engels derived the three laws of dialectics. Through the laws Engels tries to respond to the problems associated with both nature and humanity. Marxian analysis uses the laws to answer queries such as:

- What is the starting point of energy or activity start in nature?
- Why does the continuous proration in the number of galaxies, solar system, planets, animals and all the realms of nature take place?
- When does the mind begin to become aware of things?
- Why is society regulated and in which direction is such regulation headed?
- Does the study of the past include an ending; if it is then what will it be?

The three laws of dialectics are as follows:

**Law of Opposites**

Marx and Engels began with the impression that everything in reality is a combination of opposites. An illustration of this point is that electricity is made up of a positive and negative charge. Moreover, any student of science can tell you that atoms are made up of protons and electrons that are united, but essentially are opposing forces. Engels' conclusion is that everything 'contains two mutually incompatible and exclusive but nevertheless equally essential and indispensable parts or aspects'. The essential idea is that this coming together of opposites in the natural world is the trait which makes every unit auto-dynamic in nature. It also ensures a nonstop drive for movement and transformation. As Hegel stated, 'contradiction in nature is the root of all motion and of all life'.

This dichotomy more often than not exists in the natural world. In space gravity drives every molecule to the core of a star allowing it to be held collectively, at the same time, extremely high temperatures force the molecules to stay as far away from the core as possible. If either of any of the two pulls is totally successful, the star does not survive. If extremely high temperature is triumphant, the star blows up into a supernova. On the other hand, a black hole or a neutron star is the result if gravitational pull is

successful in pulling molecules to the core of a star. Similarly, live beings endeavour to stabilize inside and outside forces to sustain the state of homeostasis, i.e., the stabilization of contrasting powers, like acidity and alkalinity.

**Law of Negation**

According to the law of negation, there is a predisposition in the environment towards continuously raising the numerical amount of all things. Marx and Engels state that to organize, to move forward or to replicate a superior number, creatures are inclined in the direction of negating themselves. The nature of opposing forces is such that it is inclined to negate the thing itself, at the same time this negation results in divergence in every part and gives them movement. Consequently, creatures progress because of this energetic course of beginning and obliteration. This law can also be framed as the sequence of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

To illustrate the law of negation, Engels frequently referred to the example of the barley seed. The barley seed in the natural state sprouts (which is the death of a seed or negation) and produces a plant, which grows into ripeness. After the plant becomes ripe, it is itself negated after giving birth to barley seeds. In the social world, class also illustrates the law of negation. Historically speaking, the nobility was wiped out by the bourgeoisie revolution; this also helped create the proletariat. In Marxian analysis, this proletariat will eventually wipe out the bourgeoisie. Thus, this law suggests that every class produces its own 'gravediggers', its heirs, no sooner it finishes laying to rest its originator.

**Law of Transformation**

The law of transformation states that constant quantitative growth leads to changes in quality by 'leaps' in the environment, resulting in the production of a totally new variety of creature. This is the way in which 'quantitative development becomes qualitative change'. In the process of transformation, the rendering null and void of quality affecting quantity is also permitted.

This law has many similarities to the theory of evolution. Marxian analysis suggests that creatures in the course of quantitative growth are in addition essentially able to 'leap' to new appearances and stages of realism. The law is shown by the example of a volcanic eruption after the process of years of pressure building up. When the magma cools down after an eruption, it turns the land which was unproductive into productive land. In the social world, years of stress among contrasting classes or groups in society become the cause of an uprising. The law also occurs in reverse. For example, the introduction of better agriculture tools (changing quality) to farmland help in producing bigger amount (changing quantity) of agriculture output.

**Lenin and Dialectical Materialism**

In his treatise *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908) Lenin provided a detailed description of dialectical materialism. According to Lenin, it involves approximately three axes:

- (i) The 'materialist invention' of Hegelian dialectics
- (ii) The historicity of moral philosophy designed to class conflict
- (iii) The junction of 'laws of evolution' in physics (Helmholtz), biology (Darwin) and in political economics (Marx)

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During Lenin's time, the preceding values of matter and materialism were confronted by new findings in physics such as x-rays, electrons and the initial stages of quantum mechanics. Matter looked as if it was vanishing. In this regard, Lenin stated:

'Matter disappears' means that the frontier within which we have until now known, matter vanishes, as our understanding is becoming insightful and deeper; the qualities of matter are fading compared to previously which looked total, not changeable, and basic, and which are at the moment exposed to be comparative and distinctive only at certain levels of matter. For the sole 'property' of matter with whose recognition philosophical materialism is bound up is the property of being an objective reality of existing outside of the mind.

Lenin's major contribution then was to place materialism as a practical philosophical viewpoint away from what he considered as the 'regular materialism' uttered in declarations like that of the 18th century physician Pieve Jean Georges Cabanis who stated, 'the brain secretes thought in the same way as the liver secretes bile', the idea of 'metaphysical materialism' which believed that matter consisted of immutable, unchanging particles, or the idea of 'mechanical materialism' which believed that matter was similar to tiny molecular billiard balls mixing according to uncomplicated laws of mechanics. The explanation of Marxist theoreticians like Lenin and Engels to these arguments was of course 'dialectical materialism', in which matter was implicitly considered in the wider logic of 'objective reality' which was consistent with the new discoveries made in science.

### Materialism in Dialectical Materialism

Materialism affirms that the natural world is material in nature, and all occurrences in creation are due to 'matter in motion'. Moreover, it suggests that all things are interdependent and interconnected and develop in accordance with natural laws. It also holds that the world exists outside us which is independent of our perception of it, and is in principle predictable. Marx in *Das Kapital* stated, 'The ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought'. Thus, dialectics 'upside down'.

The wisdom of Marx's conception of materialism was that Marx believed that philosophy must take its position in the class struggle, or it will get reduced to religious idealism (such as Kant or Hegel's philosophies). This idea of materialism conceptualized critical theory.

### Marxist Criticism of Dialectical Materialism

The conception of Dialectical materialism was also criticized by academicians like the French Marxist Louis Althusser and the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci who conceptualised a Marxist 'philosophy of praxis' in its place. Marxist scholars who rejected dialectical materialism returned to the original manuscripts of Marx and Engels and produced new Marxist theoretical proposals and ideas substituting the idea of dialectical materialism. The father of the Chinese revolution Mao Zedong in his essay *On Contradiction* discarded the 'laws of dialectics' and pursued the complication of the subject of his well-known essay *For Marx* in 1965. In the essay, Althusser tries to tone the Marxist thought of 'contradiction' by making use of the notion of 'over-determination'

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from psychoanalysis. Althusser's 'philosophy of the subject' or 'anti-humanism' helped him conceptualise the notion of 'random materialism' as opposed to dialectical materialism. In an effort to solve the dilemma in a different way, Italian thinker Ludovico Geymonat made a historical epistemology from dialectical materialism. Althusser supported the epistemological method and focused on the denial of the division among subject and object which resulted in making Marx's theory mismatched with its antecedents.

## 3.3 MATERIALISTIC CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

The concept of history according to Karl Marx is known as dialectical or historical materialism. 'To Marx', explains Larson 'matter is not a product of mind: on the contrary, mind is simply the most advanced product of matter.' Though Marx rejected Hegel's content orientation, he retained the dialectical structure. 'Historical materialism is the Marxist theory of society. This is clear in a detailed passage in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.'

### 3.3.1 Stages of Human History

One of the primary themes contained in Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto* is the stages of human history. He differentiated the stages of human history on the basis of their economic regimes and categorized them into four modes of production which he called the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal and the bourgeois.

Being a materialist, Karl Marx believes thoughts to be based on facts. According to Marx, 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness.'

In this way, social laws change along with the history of social and economic evolution. There have always been conflicting classes in society. From historical evidence, these conflicting classes have three major forms, which are as follows:

- Society of slave tradition
- Aristocratic society
- Capitalist society

According to Marx, only a communist society can resolve the conflict. Even the economic basis of social evolution has two parts:

- Means of production
- Economic relations

The first comprises machines and second, ownership and ways of distribution etc. The order of society underwent a change with the development of the classes. With the development of agricultural implements, it entered into a state of agriculture.

The industrial age was conceived with the discovery of industrial machinery. In the same way, society underwent important changes with the entry of banks and currency into the medium of distribution.

### 3.3.2 Modes of Production and Practical Aspects of Historical Materialism

Therefore, the history of society is reflected in the history of development and the law governed during the successive modes of production. This succession passes through six consecutive modes of production and you will learn about them ahead in detail.

#### Check Your Progress

1. Where did Karl Marx receive his doctorate?
2. Why was *The Communist Manifesto* written?
3. What is the premise of the Law of Opposites as per Marx and Engels?
4. According to Lenin, what are the three axes of dialectical materialism?



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**Primitive society:** This was the first and the lowest form of organization of people. It existed for thousands of years. In this stage, men made use of primitive implements. The relations of production and the productive forces were not very developed. Everything was done on communal basis. The people tilled the communal land together with common tools and lived in a common dwelling, sharing products equally. The productive forces developed slowly. With the growth of the productivity, the clan began to break into families. The family became the owner of the means of production. Thus, private property arose and with it, social inequality. This resulted in the first antagonistic classes—masters and slaves.

**Slave society:** In the earlier stages of human society, called primitive communism by Marx, the community was a society. People did not have the need of accumulation. However, when man started using the result of one day's labour over a number of days, the tendency to accumulate increased. This was the beginning of the convention of wealth.

Ownership of objects spread to ownership of men because slaves helped to increase the inflow of objects. In this way, the slave and master classes came into being in society and consequently, master and slave morality grew. This increased dissatisfaction which, in its turn, led to class conflict. Slaves revolted against masters for equal rights.

**Feudal society:** As time passed, the masters did concede some rights to slaves. Though the slaves possessed some ownership over land, a major portion of the yield still went to the master. It was the inception of 'lordship society'. In this society, too, there were two conflicting classes—serfs and lords. Lords were superseded by kings or emperors. The serfs laboured and the lords or kings benefited. In order to give sanction to the authority of kings and lords, religion was resorted to.

In this way, religious ethics were born and the concepts of Heaven and Hell came into being. God was recognized as the religious emperor under whom lay many gods and goddesses. The serf was taught to pray to this God and to rest satisfied with his lot, which was allocated to him by God. It was God who had vested authority in the king. Also, there were lords authorized by the king. Thus, to obey their orders was the duty of the public. There was a vast difference in the status of the ruler and the ruled.

**Capitalist society:** In this age, conflicts in the lordship system became more intense. On the other side, steam was discovered in the forces of production and factories derived power from steam engines. The lords abandoned their dukedoms and entered the industrial field. They created the capitalist or owner class. They joined hands with businessmen and white-collared middle class people. The serfs went on to become the labour class. Thus, society was again stratified into two layers or classes—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In the bourgeois and proletariat morality too, there is a tremendous conflict as in all conflicting classes. The policy of the bourgeois is one of exploitation. They have nothing to do with the problems of the proletariat. Resorting to secular orders, laws of action and religion, they preach lessons of humbleness and patience to the labourers.

**Socialist society:** After the working class has been exploited to the hilt, it looks for an escape. Class consciousness is built up that leads to revolution against the capitalists and if it is successful, socialism is gained. In socialism, production is directed by the elected councils of the workers. The means of production are transferred from the hands of capitalists to that of the workers. He called this change the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Economically, each worker is paid according to the amount of labour he contributes to society.

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**Communist society:** The communist society, according to Marx, is the future society aimed at by all forms of development and revolution in society. This is best defined by the Party Programme in USSR as, 'Communism is a classless social system with one form of public ownership of the means of production and full social equality of all members of society under it, the all-round development of people will be accompanied by the growth of the, productive forces through continuous progress in science and technology; all the springs of cooperative wealth will flow more abundantly, and the great principle, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" will be implemented. Communism is a highly organized society of free, socially conscious working people in which public self-government will be established, a society in which labour for the good of society will become life's prime want of everyone, a necessity recognized by one and all, and the ability of each person will be employed to the greatest benefit of the people.'

In the communist state, the class struggle will come to an end. The disparity between mental and physical labour will lose recognition and the government and religion will be destroyed. Only then will true morality be conceived.

### 3.3.3 An Assessment of Historical Materialism

Historical materialism or the materialist conception of history is the direct application of the principles of dialectical materialism to the development of society. Karl Marx made it the cornerstone of his social and political philosophy. Even though Marx does not explain what he means by his theory of historical materialism, it is based on the economic interpretation of history. Marx probably used the word 'materialistic' to contrast his theory with that of Hegel as sharply as he could.

The theory of the materialistic conception of history starts with the belief that economic activities are the basis of political, legal, cultural and religious institutions and beliefs. Various forms of state or varieties of legal system cannot be taken as results of the development of human mind but have their origin in the material conditions of human life. The theory starts with the simple truth that man must eat to live and in order to eat, he must produce. Thus, his survival depends upon the success with which he can fulfil his needs.

Production is the most important of all human activities. Society is the result of these necessities of man. Marx grouped the efforts of man in this regard into four main stages:

- Primitive or Asiatic stage
- Ancient stage
- Feudal stage
- Capitalist stage

In all these stages, the class which controls the means of production controls the rest. It is this fact of domination which creates a perpetual state of tension and conflict. In all stages of human life, the forces or conditions of production determine the structure of society.

Marx's theory of materialistic conception of history contain a greater amount of truth than his dialectical materialism. According to Marxist thinker Carew Hunt, all modern writers on social sciences are indebted to Marx, even if they do not admit it. In this sense, Marx's historical materialism or economism represents a very valuable advance in the methods of social sciences.

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However, it is impossible to explain all historical movements exclusively in economic terms. Marx's theory ignores the fact that human passions, sentiments, emotions and religion also influence human behaviour. As a philosophical doctrine, the economic interpretation of history is incapable of universal application.

We may see reason in the emphasis laid down by Marx on economic factors, though history cannot be explained in terms of decisions made by politicians and kings acting in a vacuum. The major problem arises when the views of Marx are offered as a complete explanation of extremely complex phenomena. Many ideals which, according to Marx, were only reflections of material interests of one's place in the economic order, actually attain independent status. It is possible that Karl Marx and his colleague Engels recognized the over-emphasis that was laid on the economic factors. The excessive zeal of some of his admirers to make his ideas rigid led Marx on one occasion to say that he was not a Marxist. By this, he seems to have meant that he was rigid when they were applying the materialist conception of history.

3.3.4 Alienation

Karl Marx's essay *The Origins and Development of Capitalism* discussed how capitalism emerged in Europe. Marx suggested in the essay that the increase in trade around the world as a result of European colonization of the Americas and East Asia in the 17th century led to a corresponding increase in the need for trade goods. Since the feudal mode of production could not respond to the increase in the need for trade goods, there was a requirement to change the mode through which such products were produced. This necessarily involved changing the relationship between the product and the producer. This is how the capitalist mode of production emerged.

According to Marx, in feudalism, although the landlord would take a segment of the harvest from the peasant population under his control, the peasants themselves remained in contact with the means of production. On the other hand, Marx states under capitalism, the means of production are privately owned by a minority of the members of society who, acting largely independently of one another, tend to employ these means in such a way so as to get the maximum amount of profit on their investment. This capitalist class to a large extent also influences the nature of the means of production as their investment choices at the end of the day determine the selection of the means from the range of possibilities afforded by the technical capabilities of society; they even exercise a certain influence on the rate and direction of technical developments taking place in society. Thus, under capitalism the labourer is separated - or alienated - from the means of production, becoming a 'free' labourer; free to be exploited as a wage labourer, rather than as a chattel of the feudal lord.

However, the mode of production is not the only thing that changes when the transition from feudalism to capitalism takes place. Under capitalism, the nature of the product also changes, i.e., products become commodities - they not only have a use value, but an exchange value as well. In fact, under capitalism, products are produced especially as exchange goods, i.e., trade goods, which makes the use value of the product incidental to and separate from its value as a trade good. Thus for Marx, commodity production isolates the worker as a supplier of only commodity labour.

According to Marx, the choice of investments made under the capitalist mode of production is in the long run not random or at the mercy of individual capitalists, but is tightly constrained through competition with other capitalists by the requirement of profit maximization. Those capitalists who choose methods of production which maximize

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profits will survive and flourish; those who make different choices will lose their capital and the social power it represents. But the division of labour and the nature of individual labouring activity are largely determined by the means and techniques labour must employ. Hence, under capitalism the factors which determine the life activities of the labouring majority are not in its hands but in the hands of a minority whose interests are opposed to its own; and the choices made by this minority are constrained by a principle (profit maximization) which deprives people of the well-rounded variety of powers and activities which they need to be full human beings; it also tends to render their specialties themselves more and more mechanical, dehumanizing in nature, less and less a matter of developed skills or powers. Consequently, capitalist manufacture creates a positive need for mechanical, unskilled labour, a need unknown to pre-capitalist handicraft manufacture. It is plain that Marx blames capitalist social relations, and not the technical requirements of modern industry, for the fragmentation of human beings and the impoverishment of their individual powers.

In *Capital*, Marx argues in detail that there is no such happy coincidence, that it is just the kind of production dictated by profit maximization which has led to the alienating division of labour he describes. Marx believes that far from being incompatible with the technical requirements of modern industry, the potentiality for varied, well-rounded human activity is inherent in modern scientific manufacturing itself, and will begin to appear naturally as soon as production comes to be regulated consciously by the workers instead of being driven blindly by dead capital's vampire-like thirst for profit at the expense of human life. Marx stated, 'The nature of large industry conditions change of labour, fluidity of function, all-sided mobility of the labourer'. Every step in technical progress demonstrates this fact by changing the labouring function required for manufacture, thus rendering whole categories of detail labourers (who have been trained only for one function) productively superfluous, and (under capitalist conditions) doing away with their only marketable skill. Change of labour and fluidity of function are not, however, inherently destructive or crippling. On the contrary, they represent precisely the potentiality for all-sided human development whose suppression under capitalism is a chief cause of alienation. But if change of labour now imposes itself as an overpowering natural law, to large industry through its catastrophes makes it a question of life or death to recognize the change of labour and hence the greatest possible many-sidedness of the labourer as a universal law of social production, and adapt its relation to the normal actuality of this law to replace the partial individual, the mere carrier of a detail function, with the totally developed individual, fit for the changing demands of labour, for whom different social functions are only so many modes of activity, relieving one another.

For Marx, bringing fulfillment and meaning to the lives of human beings is entirely dependent on the development and exercise of their essential human powers, whose focus is labour or production. Due to the historical nature of these human powers that vary according to society and expand in the course of history, the degree to which alienation is an organized social occurrence also varies, as a function both of what society's productive capacities are and of the extent to which the human potentialities they embody have been integrated into the lives of actual men and women. In general terms, the degree of alienation that exists in a capitalist society is directly proportional to the gap between human potential in the society's productive powers and its actual realization. Thus, for Marx the possibility for alienation increases along with the productive powers of a society. For as these powers expand, there is more and more room for a discrepancy between what human life is and what it might be. There is more and more pressure on social arrangements to allow for the lives of individual human beings to

Check Your Progress
1. What are the four modes of production according to Marx?
2. What were the characteristics of the feudal society according to Marx?
3. What is the content of alienation in Marx's theory of capitalism?
4. According to Marx, what is the relationship between the degree of alienation and the productive powers of a society?

*Karl Marx*

share the wealth of human capacities which belong to social labour. Marx's criticism of capitalism thus makes it clear that it is a system in which social arrangements have completely failed to accommodate the potentialities for self-actualization which the social powers of production have put within people's reach.

## NOTES

## 3.4 SUMMARY

- While Marx and Engels shared a theoretical orientation, there were many differences between the two men. Marx tended to be a highly abstract thinker, a disorderly intellectual who was very oriented towards his family. On the other hand, Engels was a practical thinker who was a neat and tidy businessman.
- Although Marx himself never used the term, many Marxists consider Dialectical Materialism as the theoretical source of several strands of Marxism. Joseph Dietzgen first used the term in 1887; however, it was only after Georgi Plekhanov—the father of Russian Marxism—used the term that it became a part of common usage in Marxian analysis.
- Dialectical Materialism refers to the societal and economic transformation born of material forces. Essentially, the concept of dialectical materialism suggests that all historical growth and change results from the struggle of opposites.
- According to the law of negation, there is a predisposition in the environment towards continuously raising the numerical amount of all things. Marx and Engels state that to organize, to move forward or to replicate a superior number, creatures are inclined in the direction of negating themselves.
- The law of transformation states that constant quantitative growth leads to changes in quality by 'leaps' in the environment, resulting in the production of a totally new variety of creature.
- The conception of Dialectical materialism was also criticized by academicians like the French Marxist Louis Althusser and the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci who conceptualised a Marxist 'philosophy of praxis' in its place.
- Being a materialist, Karl Marx believes thoughts to be based on facts. According to Marx, 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness.'
- Historical materialism or the materialist conception of history is the direct application of the principles of dialectical materialism to the development of society. Karl Marx made it the cornerstone of his social and political philosophy.
- According to Marxist analysis, a collection of persons having familiar characteristics is not a class. For example, the proletariat cannot be labelled as a collection of people 'as against capital'.
- From 1848 until the end of his life, Marx apparently ceased to be a philosopher and became a sociologist and, more of, an economist. He had received an excellent

## Check Your Progress

11. Marx's account of alienation in capitalist society aims at substantiating three principal theses. What are they?
12. Does Marx believe that alienation can be overcome?

## NOTES

economic education and knew the economic thinking of his time a few men did. He was, and wanted to be, an economist in the strict and precise sense of the word.

- Marxian analysis believes that the capitalist ruling class is unable to maintain its superiority without permanently revolutionizing the instruments of production. Thus, while previous ruling classes took many centuries to develop the forces of production, the ruling class of capitalist society was able to develop them in a few decades.
- Marx insisted that social institutions and relations of production are not facts of nature but historically transient social forms which are the products of human activity every bit as much as wheat, cloth or machinery.
- In his works Marx did not say much about the political or administrative structure of post-capitalist society, beyond insisting that it will be democratic and will involve control by the 'society itself' rather than by a separate political mechanism or state bureaucracy.

## 3.5 KEY TERMS

- **Diamat:** Diamat was a social theory coined by the 19th century philosopher Joseph Dietzgen. It emphasized commodities and the effects of their exchange over time. 'Diamat' is based upon three dialectical laws: 1. The identity of opposites; 2. the transition from quantity to quality; 3. the negation of negation.
- **Political economy:** The term for studying production, buying and selling, and their relations with law, custom and government, as well as with the distribution of national income and wealth, including through the budget process.
- **Surplus-value:** Karl Marx first used the idea of 'surplus-value' in his analysis of the political economy. Surplus-value refers to the new value of a particular product created by a working class individual that is in excess of their own labour costs.
- **Philosophy of Praxis:** The Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci stated that it is an ideological instrument that must be used to increase awareness among the masses about the mechanism of politics and culture, and awareness about the historical and economical determination of ideas. This would allow the masses to master their own lives and to 'lead their own society and to control those who lead'.

## 3.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. In 1841, Marx received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Berlin.
2. Since some of his writings had upset the Prussian government, the French government (at the request of the Prussians) expelled Marx in 1845, because of which he moved to Brussels. His radicalism was growing, and he had become an active member of the international revolutionary movement. He was also associated with the Communist League and was asked to write a document (with Engels) expounding its aims and beliefs. The result was Marx's most famous work *The Communist Manifesto* published in 1848.
3. Marx and Engels began with the impression that everything in reality is a combination of opposites. An illustration of this point is that electricity is made up of a positive and negative charge. The essential idea is that this coming together



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of opposites in the natural world is the trait which makes every unit auto-dynamic and in motion. It also ensures a constant drive for movement and transformation.

4. According to Lenin, the three axes are:

- (i) The materialist development of Hegel's dialectic
- (ii) The historicity of moral philosophy designed to class conflict
- (iii) The junction of laws of evolution in physics (Helmholtz), biology (Darwin) and in political economics (Marx)

5. Marx differentiated the stages of human history on the basis of their economic regimes and categorized them into four modes of production which he called the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal and the bourgeois.

6. In this kind of society, though the slaves possessed some ownership over land, a major portion of the yield still went to the master. It was the inception of lordship society. In this society, too, there were two conflicting classes - serfs and lords. Lords were superseded by kings or emperors. The serfs laboured and the lords or kings benefited. In order to give sanction to the authority of kings and lords, religion was resorted to.

7. Under capitalism, the nature of the product also changes, i.e., products become commodities - they not only have a use value, but an exchange value as well. In fact, under capitalism, products are produced especially as exchange goods, i.e., trade goods, which makes the use value of the product incidental to and separate from its value as a trade good. Thus for Marx, commodity production isolates the worker as a supplier of only commodity labour.

8. For Marx, bringing fulfillment and meaning to the lives of human beings is entirely dependent on the development and exercise of their essential human powers, whose focus is labour or production.

9. Marxists observe that the 'pure' labour (positioned at the farthest left and region), whose societal position (every one of dissimilar 'intermediate' forms) is not in any way opposed and in opposition to him, and he is by no means 'methodologically' as forms fused together with each other in differently arranged multitude. Alternatively, the sociological observation takes care of the 'pure' labour in addition to the 'pure' industrialist like 'methodological pillars' suspended among the network of transitional classes.

10. The vital theme of the work was class struggle. In it they state that all history is the history of the class struggle: free men and slaves, patricians and plebeians, barons and serfs, master artisans and journeymen.

11. Marx's account of alienation in capitalist society aims at substantiating three principal theses:

- The vast majority of people living under capitalism are alienated.
- The chief causes of this alienation cannot be removed so long as the capitalist mode of production prevails.
- Alienation as a pervasive social phenomenon can and will be abolished in a post-capitalist (socialist or communist) mode of production.

12. Marx does believe that alienation can be developed in a modern, complex and industrialized society. But he is not necessarily committed to denying that there might be causes of alienation other than those specifically identified by his theory. The main burden of Marx's message is that capitalist social relations are the most

pervasive and obvious cause of alienation, which must be abolished first, before lesser or more hidden causes can be dealt with.

3.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a brief biography of Karl Marx.
2. What was the basic difference between the mindsets of Engel and Marx?
3. What is dialectical materialism?
4. Which are Engel's three laws of dialectics?
5. What was the main subject of Marx's Communist Manifesto?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the criticism garnered by Marx's dialectical materialism.
2. Give a detailed assessment of Marx's conception of historical materialism.
3. Discuss Marx's explanation of feudalism.
4. How are capitalism and alienation related? Elaborate.
5. 'Marxian outlook of class portrays the person as a location of conflict.' Explain.

3.8 FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 4 KARL MARX -II

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### Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Theory of Class Struggle
- 4.3 Theory of Capitalism
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 Key Terms
- 4.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.7 Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Further Reading

### NOTES

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### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit, you studied the theories of Auguste Comte. In this unit, you will learn about Marx's conception of the dialectical approach which he derived from Hegel and which in fact shaped all of Marx's work.

As a student of sociology, you must have heard the name of Karl Marx. The thoughts of this philosopher and revolutionary had a huge impact on the history of the twentieth century; in fact, his writings continue to influence thinkers of political science, economy, history, etc., to this day. Despite his political orientation towards the creation of a communist society, Marx devoted much of his writings to the dialectical and critical analyses of capitalist society. The dialectic emphasizes that among the elements of social world there are no simple cause and effect relationships; fact and value are not seemingly divided clearly between a line; there are no hard and fast dividing lines among phenomena in the social world. Marx's analysis of actors and structure should be viewed in the framework of his opinions on human nature, which is also the starting point for his critical analysis of the contradictions inherent within the capitalist structure. Marx stated that a disagreement exists between our human nature and work in the capitalist system. Workers get alienated from their labour because it does not belong to them, but rather to the capitalist owners.

Marx's theories and opinions were a response to the quick changes taking place in Europe, primarily Germany, as a result of industrialization. He also studied the nature of the structures of capitalism and their adverse effects on the actors and elaborated on the pivotal role played by commodities in capitalism. He used the term 'reification' to explain the process whereby social structure becomes naturalised, absolute and independent of human action. In this context, it can be said that capital is the most reified component in a capitalist society.

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## 4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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### NOTES

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

- Discuss Marx's concept of dialectical materialism
- Explain Marx's materialistic conception of history
- Analyse the theory of alienation as given by Marx
- Discuss theory of class struggle
- Describe the theory of capitalism

## NOTES

## 4.2 THEORY OF CLASS STRUGGLE

According to Marxist analysis, a collection of persons having familiar characteristics is not a class. For example, the proletariat cannot be labelled as a collection of people 'as against capital'. In a societal setting, class is not organizational or related to a particular 'place' (a position in society which a person may possibly 'occupy' or persons might be 'interpolated', etc.). Rather, Marxists believe that class is a societal bond 'like capital itself' (Marx 1965, 766).

A bond is neither a collection of people even when there may be bonding in a specified collection of people or a position where a group may be formed or situated. Keeping away such ideas, it can be said that class is *the relation itself* (like the relationship between capital and labour) more particularly, *a relation of struggle*. Thus, the basic principle of class is *class struggle*. To put it another way, 'class struggle is class itself'. Marx noted that 'class struggle' is fundamental to 'class' by emphasizing that survival 'for itself'—which is the conflicting survival under pressure—is fundamental to the survival of 'class' (Marx 1969, 173).

## Marxist and Sociological Analysis of Class

The sociological origin of the term class results in an awkwardness—every person of bourgeois society is not clearly the integral part of the groups labelled 'capitalists' and 'proletarians'. This awkwardness is produced by the origin of classes as 'groups' or 'places' and to escape this sociological Marxism has taken refuge in labels like 'middle strata', 'middle classes' and so on. These labels are residual or consisting of the collection of people and are academic fabrications created by poor theoretical system. On the other hand, Marxist origin of class comes across no such problems, which considers class-bonding (for example, capital-labour bonding) as organizing the lives of dissimilar persons in dissimilar ways.

There is a disparity among the Marxists and sociological analysis. Marxists observe the 'pure' labour (positioned at the farthest left-hand region), whose societal position (every one of dissimilar 'intermediate' forms) is not in any way at odds and in opposition to him, and he is by no means 'methodologically' advantaged; nor the 'pure' industrialist. Together they somewhat are viewed merely as forms fused together with each other in differently arranged multitude. Alternatively, the sociological observation takes care of the 'pure' labour in addition to the 'pure' industrialist like 'methodological pillars' suspended among the network of transitional classes.

According to Marx, this dissimilarity is significant as the 'pure' worker or labour does not exist. This is not for the reason of comparative reduction of the size of the 'traditional working class' (even if the particular hypothetically imagined collection of people is distinct). In fact, the opposite is true as the income bonding is a 'bourgeois and mystifying form' (Marx 1965 Part VI). And whosoever stays within its parameter, even and particularly the industrialist, who is a manufacturer of 'surplus value', lives a life separated with himself. His roots stay caught up in exploiting the labour while he dreams

## Check Your Progress

5. What are the four modes of production according to Marx?
6. What were the characteristics of the feudal society according to Marx?
7. What is the context of alienation in Marx's theory of capitalism?
8. According to Marx, what brings true fulfilment to humans?

## NOTES

of idealist 'bourgeois' reality. Therefore, the series of class conflict goes all the way through the person who produces 'surplus-value'.

Again, for the Marxist origin of class, there is no awkwardness in concerning the particular methods in which capital-labour bonding organizes in a hostile way. On the other hand, absence of the working class in its pristine form reduces the sociological origin of the class and brings it to the lowest level. An additional marked divergence among both formats of the Marxist view which states about a single class bonding (specifically, the capital-worker bonding) occurring in the present social order but the sociological proposal recognize numerous associations equal to the number of probable connections among societal space or collection of people. On this basis, the 'sociologists' lay blame on the 'Marxists' of decreasing societal divisions. In fact, sociologists have to be blamed of the charge of decreasing on these lines. The sociologists desire to place every person explicitly with no remnants in single or otherwise extra particular crowds or situations: a 'cross categorical' person is not capable of emerging within the depiction drawn by the sociologists.

The basis of sociologists' increase of societal divisions into various levels like 'middle class' 'new petty bourgeoisies', and so on is to search a clearly consigned slot for every person. Therefore, there exist specifically the patterns in which the expressions of class and the persons are alienated among themselves—the numerical complexity of the pattern system in which the 'geological fracture-line' of the conflict of class is present throughout is not just among person but casts a shadow on the hypothesis as well.

An associated position of Marxist origin is—different from that of sociologists'—that class is not interpreted in the expression of attitude having anyone of various societal responsibilities. Since his earliest work '*On the Jewish Question*' and beyond, Marx criticized any societal environment where classification of the responsibilities is acquired as 'alienated' and not liberated.

Far from marking the classification of responsibilities as a procedural theory, Marxian outlook of class portrays the person as a location of conflict; the individual conflict results in not merely as the 'universal' (attitude of responsibility and collectively alike), however in addition 'particular' (distinctive and in social context diverse) proportion of individualism participation. Neither theoretically nor practically has the classification of responsibilities liked 'proletarian' or 'bourgeois' (otherwise definitely 'man' or 'woman' or 'citizen') symbolizes the explanation of Marx; quite oppositely they form at the same time as one amongst the many tribulations which 'class' within its descriptions is proposed to solve.

While among the Marxist and the sociological origins of class, again one more spot of dissimilarity is, naturally, political. The sociological outlook promotes policy of coalitions among classes and portions of class: along with it gives emphasis to the 'pure' labourer's class an advantaged—important and dominant—political character. In Marxist outlook, there is impossibility of these types of coalitions. The 'pure' labourer class (a person in a job as compared to jobless, the 'direct' manufacturers of 'surplus value' compared to the 'indirect' manufacturers, the 'proletariat' compared to the '*lumpen proletariat*') does not have politically a procedural advantaged position, as these 'places' do not subsist.

There is no issue of assigning to 'rising' as compared to 'declining' classes to domination of radical significance or power: these terms only make sense as soon as classes are viewed as positions or as collectivity of people. Lastly, the entire idea of forefront political party (added with its watered down variations) is reversed as the



dissimilarities among 'advanced' plus 'backward' class fundamentally fade away amid the sociological origin of class.

However, classes are not collectivity of people or positions except bonds of conflict, therefore radical struggle obtains the shape of struggle among the collectivity (for all times it happens improperly and contaminatingly) which is implicitly the result of class conflict. It is not implicitly sociological as in the case, the appearance of 'pre given' classes—next to very last—interested more in already known academic and opinionated 'truth'. The issue facing the person is not on whose region however relatively, on which region (which region of class bonding) he or she is situated; and yet this concluding query is not implicitly the collective preference among the surviving positions or responsibilities. Not merely, in terms of quantity as well as in terms of quality, the characteristic feature of conflict of class is natural inconsistency. The focal point of the Marxist origin of class penetrating the question of alternatives by means of which class conflict deals with us and in this procedure forbids plea to whichever responsibility or position or collectivity of people in which (according to sociology) we are by now situated prior to whatsoever our decisive promise we want to make.

The sociological origin of class, every time it needs to set up Marxist identification, forever turns into 'economic-determinist'. This is for the reason that the single 'indicator' of class link ('class' at this point being viewed again as a position or collectivity of people) is, according to Marx's work, the universal bonding to the 'means of production'. In addition to being bonded to the 'means of production', nevertheless persons are part of a class, and locate themselves bonded to the state and to 'ideology' and also to the local church and so on.

Therefore, the sociological origin of class produces a system of detached societal 'levels' or 'practices' or 'instances' (Althusser) and has to tackle query of how these 'levels' are linked. The reply is familiar: in the last instance 'the economic movement asserts itself as necessary'. In additional terminology, sociological Marxism totals to a fiscal conclusion with lengthy and intricate 'deterministic' series. To assert that, as Althusser did, such a premise is no longer fiscal is like maintaining that a machine is no longer machine due to the asset of number of cogwheels its motor drives.

The whole thing is dissimilar to the Marxist origin of class. Marx's difference among class 'in itself' and 'for itself' is in use as unique, not among the ranks of society but among the sociological and the Marxist origins of class itself: if a class turns out to be as soon as it is 'for itself' subsequently political struggle by means of all its erratic consequences and growth and expenses previously put together into what sociological Marxist identify as fiscal 'base'. While sociological Marxists try to unify ranks which it presumes to be separate and on the foundation of the threshold and difficulty can rely on the cause and effect and external associations nevertheless 'structural' (Althusser) variety, Marxist Marxism travels in the reverse direction and illustrates differences contained by an opposing entirety, i.e., inside an internally and destructively associated sum total: 'The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence the unity of the diverse' (Marx 1973, 101). The totality of the relation between various classes which is specific to, to take an example, bourgeois society is prevalent—wholly prevalent, though in characteristically different ways—in each individual who forms that society's moments or part. As Lukács stated, 'it is not the primacy of the economic motives in historical explanation that constitutes the decisive difference between Marxism and bourgeois thought, but the point of view of totality'.

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Alongside with 'the point of view of the totality', a completely new origin of class politics is initiated. Previously 'politics' is perceived as a separate societal rank; the confirming assessment of the survival of class 'for itself' develops into creation of a political association of almost traditional—meaning to say: 'a bourgeois'-type. It is viewed that still a forefront party is perceived to be a different 'bourgeois' idea. Nevertheless, the 'bourgeois' social order, not Marx differentiates among the ranks of political state and general social order—'On the Jewish Question'—and recommends the previous as the ground where the societal collection of people in their readiness may participate. In the added terms, Marxist origin of class, 'the point of view of totality' discards specifically the narrowness of the formation of politics which the sociological origin of class necessitates.

On top of the Marxist perception, the classification of politics develops into extensive variety in which class conflicts erratically take place. Not only no subject is disqualified from the political program; the idea of political program is itself disqualified as this type of program disqualifies and brings to periphery all that which is not part of some tentatively conventional political sphere of influence.

The already mentioned explanations do not assert to the wholeness or to the condition of a justification of the origin of the class which have been tried systematically to be retold. They aspire to, make it, some what lucid about what the Marxist perception of class involves. As for the consideration of the assessment of this perception, the proposition may possibly be dangerous that the only possible way of analytical inquiry which appears to be productive that which enquires is the 'capital-labour relation' is the only and exclusive such bonding of conflict which, in every part of its fulfilment, constitutes our lives. And at this point there can be no doubt of replacing Marx: additional types of bonding (sexual and racial bonds, for example) are arbitrated all the way through the 'capital relation' just as for its fractions; it subsists as arbitrated all the way through them.

The first and foremost sociologist and economist of the capitalist regime was Marx. He had a certain notion of that regime, of the fate it imposed upon men; and of the progression it would go through. As sociologist-economist of the system, he had the capitalist view of the sociological issues; he had no exact image of what the socialist system would be, and he repeatedly said that man cannot know the future in advance.

From 1848 until the end of his life, Marx apparently ceased to be a philosopher and became a sociologist and more of an economist. He had received an excellent economic education and knew the economic thinking of his time a few men did. He was, and wanted to be, an economist in the strict and precise sense of the word.

Communist Manifesto

In The Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels presented some of their scientific thoughts in combined form. The vital theme of the work was class struggle. In it they state that all history is the history of the class struggle: free men and slaves, patricians and plebeians, barons and serfs, master artisans and journeymen. In short, the oppressors and oppressed have been in perpetual conflict with one another and have carried on a relentless struggle, at times covert, at time open.

This struggle has always resulted in a revolution that changes the whole of society or with the mutual devastation of the warring classes. The work stated that all societies in human history have been divided into such warring classes, contemporary capitalist

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Check Your Progress table with 2 questions and answers.

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society is no different. However, what is different between contemporary capitalist society and societies that preceded is that the ruling class of capitalist society, i.e., the bourgeoisie, has certain characteristics which are without precedent.

Marxian analysis believes that the capitalist ruling class is unable to maintain its superiority without permanently revolutionizing the instruments of production. Thus, while previous ruling classes took many centuries to develop the forces of production, the ruling class of capitalist society was able to develop them in a few decades. *The Communist Manifesto* states that the means of production has been revolutionised by the bourgeoisie by engaging in heartless competition.

Moreover, they have created a global market for themselves which is destroying the leftovers of the feudal system and traditional communities. However, just like the forces that gave birth to capitalism developed in a feudal society, similarly, the forces of production which will give birth to socialism are developing in modern society.

According to Marx, between the capitalist ruling class and proletariat there exist various in-between groups like artisans, petite bourgeoisie, merchants and peasant landowners. However, he suggested that along with the development of the capitalist regime there will be a tendency towards crystallization of social relations into two groups: the capitalists and the working class or wage workers.

For Marx, only these two classes represent the possibility for a political system and an idea of a social system. When the revolution comes, everyone will be obliged to join either the capitalists or the working class. On the day when the working class seizes power, there will be a final split with the course of all previous history. In fact, the hostile nature of all known societies will disappear.

Marx thus regarded politics and the state as less important to what was occurring within the society itself. He presented political power as the appearance of social conflicts. Marx believed that in reality political power was the means by which the ruling class maintained its control and exploitation. Thus, the abolition of class contradictions must logically involve the disappearance of politics and of the state, because politics and the state are the expressions of social conflict.

The idea is that men enter into specific relations that are independent of their will; in other words, we can follow the progress of history by analysing the structure of societies, the forces of productions and the relations of production, and not by basing our explanation on men's ways of thinking about themselves. In every society there can be a notable economic base, or infrastructure, as it has come to be called, and the superstructure. The infrastructure consists basically of the forces and relations of production, while within the superstructure there are the legal and political institutions as well as ways of thinking, ideologies and philosophies. The instrument of the historical movement is the opposition between the forces and the relations of production. The forces of production seem to be basically a given society's capability to produce, a capability which is a function of scientific knowledge, technological equipment and the organization of combined labour while the relations of production seem to be basically distinguished by relation of property.

### 4.3 THEORY OF CAPITALISM

Marx's adherence to the notion of freedom is explicit: to be free 'in the materialistic sense' is to be 'free not through the negative power of avoiding this and that, but through the positive might of making one's true individuality count'. In most modern thinkers

#### Check Your Progress

9. What is the disparity among the Marxists and sociological analysis?
10. What was the central theme of *The Communist Manifesto*?

## NOTES

before Marx, the conception of positive freedom is given a predominantly individualistic and moralistic interpretation. To be sure, they note that the exercise of this freedom requires the satisfaction of certain social (especially political) conditions. But they conceive self-determination itself chiefly as the inner volitional disposition of individual human agents, their mastery over their impulses and passions through rational self-knowledge and moral fortitude.

Given Marx's materialist conception of human beings as socially productive beings, he cannot be content with an introverted, spiritualistic sort of self-determination. For Marx, true self-determination must rather consist of the imposition of human control on the social conditions of human production.

Marx insisted that social institutions and relations of production are not facts of nature but historically transient social forms which are the products of human activity every bit as much as wheat, cloth or machinery. He does so in part to give the lie to those who would defend existing institutions by declaring them unalterable; but his purpose is also to make clear how much is required if human beings are to have genuine freedom or self-determination. If social relations are human products, then people cannot be accounted free until they create these relations with full consciousness of what they be (as Locke says) subject to the arbitrary will of others; it also requires the social relations in which they stand should be products of their own will. To recognize this fully is already to see through the sophistry which represents capitalist society as free because its relationships result not from coercive laws or the will of rulers but (apparently) by accident, from unregulated economic decisions made by individuals.

Freedom for Marx requires the conscious production of people's social relations, it is something which can be achieved only in community with others, and cannot be attained by retreating into oneself or by the exercise of one's self-determination within the confines of a jealously guarded 'private domain' in which society does not interfere. Yet Marx does not neglect to emphasize the complementary point that no society can be free unless it 'gives to each the social room for his essential life expression'. There can be no genuine freedom unless men and women have the opportunity to exercise choice over their own lives and develop their individuality fully and freely. Marx is the consistent foe of political repression, press censorship and other such measures which curb the free development and expression of individuals. He has only contempt for any brand of communism which would turn the state or community into 'the universal capitalist' by imposing a uniform, impoverished mode of life on all members of society alike. There can be no doubt that for Marx, individual liberty is necessary to a free society. But it is equally evident, to Marx at least, that the liberty proclaimed by bourgeois liberalism is not sufficient for genuine (that is, positive) freedom.

Human freedom can be attained only when people's social relations are subject to conscious human control. Therefore, it is only in communist society that people can be truly free, because human control over social relations can only be collective control, and only in communist society can this control be exercised by and for all members of society. Communism, says Marx, 'consciously treats all natural (*naturwüchsig*) presuppositions as creations of earlier human beings, divesting them of their natural character (*Naturwüchsigkeit*) and subjecting them to the might of the united individuals'. Only communist society can do this, because communist society will be a classless society, and in it, people will 'participate in society just as individuals.

Further, because individual self-expression and self-actualization are possible only through the capitalist division of labour, even individual freedom will become possible only with the collective human control over people's conditions of life. Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his abilities on all sides; hence



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personal freedom becomes possible only within the community. Marx does not conceive of social control over the means of production as the exclusion of individuals from ownership of what they produce and use. On the contrary, it is capitalism which involves such exclusion, since it delivers the means and objects of production over to a class of non-workers. Communism, as Marx sees it, will be a system of 'individual property for the producer', based on 'cooperation and the possession in common of land and the means of production'. The means of production must be owned collectively, because in modern industry, labour is directly social, and the disposition of the means of production is always an act affecting society as a whole. Such acts, in Marx's communism, will be performed consciously.

Decisions about them will be made democratically, by society as a whole, and not by a privileged class, acting contrary to the interests of the labouring majority and subject to the alien constraint of profit-maximization. Marx's critique of capitalism is based on some familiar philosophical value conceptions such as self-actualization and positive freedom.

Most of these issues are empirical ones; but this does not mean that they are clear cut or easily resolved. Any assessment seasoned with the proper scholarly caution would probably be inconclusive. It is unlikely that anyone, in Marx's time or today, knows enough to be entitled to a strong opinion for or against what Marx says about alienation and its social causes. If many people do hold strong opinions, this is largely because the only alternative to committing oneself in practice for or against Marx would be to take no effective stand whatsoever on the social reality around us.

Marx's account of alienation in capitalist society aims at substantiating three principal theses:

- 1. The vast majority of people living under capitalism are alienated.
- 2. The chief causes of this alienation cannot be removed so long as the capitalist mode of production prevails.
- 3. Alienation as a pervasive social phenomenon can and will be abolished in a post-capitalist (socialist or communist) mode of production.

These three theses are obviously interrelated. Here, (1) is more or less presupposed by both (2) and (3). But (1) itself, as Marx understands it, is also dependent on (2) and (3), and on his grounds for holding them. In support of (1), a Marxist might cite widespread feelings of disorientation and dissatisfaction among people living in capitalist societies, or he might point to the preoccupation of philosophers, artists, social thinkers and popular consciousness with the problem of alienation, whether in an overtly Marxian or in various non-Marxian forms. But these considerations, however well substantiated, would not strictly show that alienation, as Marx understands it, exists in capitalist society.

By the same token, a critic of Marx cannot successfully rebut (1) merely by arguing that people in capitalist societies are on the whole satisfied with their lives, even if a convincing case for this could be made out. Alienation, as Marx conceives of it, is not fundamentally a matter of consciousness or of how people in fact feel about themselves or their lives. Alienation is rather a state of objective unfulfillment of the frustration of really existing human needs and potentialities.

The consciousness people have of this unfulfillment is merely a reflection of alienation, at most a symptom or evidence of it. Marx's real grounds for believing that people in capitalist society are alienated is not that they are conscious of being alienated, but rather the objective existence of potentialities for human fulfillment that must be frustrated as long as the capitalist mode of production prevails. Marx has no very definite

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conception of post-capitalist society or of the possibilities for fulfillment which he believes will be actualized in it. Hence, Marx does not believe (3) because he has some clear idea of the ways in which socialism or communism will provide people with opportunities for self-actualization.

Rather, he seems to believe that because he is confident that people can achieve a fulfilling life when the main obstacles to it are removed, and because he thinks he has identified these obstacles, they are the outmoded social relations of the bourgeois society.

Marx's confidence in the human potential of modern science and technology is initially plausible. To reject it is to embrace the paradox that increasing people's powers, their self-understanding and their interdependence has no tendency to enrich their lives, their freedom and their community. The burden of proof seems to be on anyone who would defend such paradoxes. It is not obvious that events in our century have rendered them more defensible than they were in Marx's time. Especially important for Marx's conception of our potentialities for freedom is his belief that the values of individuality and community are reconcilable, that post-capitalist society can simultaneously achieve greater individual autonomy and greater social unity than people's productive powers and social relations have hitherto permitted.

Marx's critics have been particularly suspicious of his silence concerning the social decision procedures through which free individuals are to achieve the rational collective regulation of their associated labour. At least since Rousseau, philosophers and political theorists have set themselves the problem of finding a form of human association which could unite individuals, putting the common might of society at the disposal of each while at the same time leaving all completely free to follow a self-chosen plan of life.

In his works Marx did not say much about the political or administrative structure of post-capitalist society, beyond insisting that it will be democratic and will involve control by the 'society itself' rather than by a separate political mechanism or state bureaucracy. However, Marx did not view this as a procedural problem. Marx believed that the main obstacle to freedom of an individual and social unity was the class division of society. As long as such a division exists, the objectives of freedom and community are unattainable and seem opposed to each other. Marx states that in a classless society where one's person's individual freedom does not mean the slavery of another person, questions of social decision-making will not appear to people in the form of theoretical paradoxes or unsolvable technical problems. For Marx, as long as class division exists, any political mechanism will not promote genuine liberty or community, but only the ruling class interest that such a mechanism serves. Only after class is abolished can people begin to decide, on the basis of the productive capacities at their disposal, how they will live together as free individuals.

Marx does believe that alienation can be overcome in a modern, complex and industrialized society. But he is not necessarily committed to denying that there might be causes of alienation other than those specifically identified by his theory. The main burden of Marx's message is that capitalist social relations are the most pervasive and obvious cause of alienation, which must be abolished first, before lesser or more hidden causes can be dealt with. But there is no reason why Marx might not grant that such traditional social ills as religious fanaticism, racism and sexual oppression also contribute to alienation, and would have to be fought against even under socialism. Marx's explanation of alienation might also be challenged in some of its details. It is arguable, for instance, that Marx's views about the capitalist division of labour, whatever truth they might have had in his own century, are now obsolete.

From 1848 until the end of the nineteenth century, Marx's views about the capitalist division of labour, whatever truth they might have had in his own century, are now obsolete.

Check Your Progress

1. Does Marx believe that alienation can be overcome in a modern, complex and industrialized society?
2. What are the main causes of alienation according to Marx's theory?
3. What are the main causes of alienation other than those specifically identified by his theory?
4. What is the main burden of Marx's message?
5. What is the main cause of alienation according to Marx's theory?

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Certainly it would be difficult to maintain that capitalism still exhibits a tendency to turn all labour into the unskilled mechanical sort, to 'make the absence of development into a specialty'. But even if this point is no longer defensible, Marx's explanation of alienation in terms of the capitalist division of labour may still be tenable. For the constraint of profit-maximization may still exercise a powerful (and harmful) effect on the nature of labouring activity, and inhibit the development of a well-rounded humanity on the part of workers. If this is so, then Marx's explanation of alienation in terms of the capitalist division of labour may still be essentially correct, even if the specific details of his account are not. Marx is always the first to insist that capitalism is not an immutable system, but one which is undergoing constant change. It would not be inconsistent with his views to recognize that his account of alienation in 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalist society might not be applicable in detail to its descendants in later centuries.

## 4.4 SUMMARY

- While Marx and Engels shared a theoretical orientation, there were many differences between the two men. Marx tended to be a highly abstract thinker, a disorderly intellectual who was very oriented towards his family. On the other hand, Engels was a practical thinker who was a neat and tidy businessman.
- Although Marx himself never used the term, many Marxists consider Dialectical Materialism as the theoretical source of several strands of Marxism. Joseph Dietzgen first used the term in 1887; however, it was only after Georgi Plekhanov—the father of Russian Marxism—used the term that it became a part of common usage in Marxian analysis.
- Dialectical Materialism refers to the societal and economic transformation born of material forces. Essentially, the concept of dialectical materialism suggests that all historical growth and change results from the struggle of opposites.
- According to the law of negation, there is a predisposition in the environment towards continuously raising the numerical amount of all things. Marx and Engels state that to organize, to move forward or to replicate a superior number, creatures are inclined in the direction of negating themselves.
- The law of transformation states that constant quantitative growth leads to changes in quality by 'leaps' in the environment, resulting in the production of a totally new variety of creature.
- The conception of Dialectical materialism was also criticized by academicians like the French Marxist Louis Althusser and the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci who conceptualised a Marxist 'philosophy of praxis' in its place.
- Being a materialist, Karl Marx believes thoughts to be based on facts. According to Marx, 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness.'
- Historical materialism or the materialist conception of history is the direct application of the principles of dialectical materialism to the development of society. Karl Marx made it the cornerstone of his social and political philosophy.
- According to Marxist analysis, a collection of persons having familiar characteristics is not a class. For example, the proletariat cannot be labelled as a collection of people 'as against capital'.
- From 1848 until the end of his life, Marx apparently ceased to be a philosopher and became a sociologist and, more of, an economist. He had received an excellent

## Check Your Progress

11. Marx's account of alienation in capitalist society aims at substantiating three principal theses. What are they?
12. Does Marx believe that alienation can be overcome?

## NOTES

economic education and knew the economic thinking of his time a few men did. He was, and wanted to be, an economist in the strict and precise sense of the word.

- Marxian analysis believes that the capitalist ruling class is unable to maintain its superiority without permanently revolutionizing the instruments of production. Thus, while previous ruling classes took many centuries to develop the forces of production, the ruling class of capitalist society was able to develop them in a few decades.
- Marx insisted that social institutions and relations of production are not facts of nature but historically transient social forms which are the products of human activity every bit as much as wheat, cloth or machinery.
- In his works Marx did not say much about the political or administrative structure of post-capitalist society, beyond insisting that it will be democratic and will involve control by the 'society itself' rather than by a separate political mechanism or state bureaucracy.

## 4.5 KEY TERMS

- **Diamat:** Diamat was a social theory coined by the 19th century philosopher Joseph Dietzgen. It emphasized commodities and the effects of their exchange over time. 'Diamat' is based upon three dialectical laws: 1. The identity of opposites; 2. the transition from quantity to quality; 3. the negation of negation.
- **Political economy:** The term for studying production, buying and selling, and their relations with law, custom and government, as well as with the distribution of national income and wealth, including through the budget process.
- **Surplus-value:** Karl Marx first used the idea of 'surplus-value' in his analysis of the political economy. Surplus-value refers to the new value of a particular product created by a working class individual that is in excess of their own labour costs.
- **Philosophy of Praxis:** The Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci stated that it is an ideological instrument that must be used to increase awareness among the masses about the mechanism of politics and culture, and awareness about the historical and economical determination of ideas. This would allow the masses to master their own lives and to 'lead their own society and to control those who lead'.

## 4.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. In 1841, Marx received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Berlin.
2. Since some of his writings had upset the Prussian government, the French government (at the request of the Prussians) expelled Marx in 1845, because of which he moved to Brussels. His radicalism was growing, and he had become an active member of the international revolutionary movement. He was also associated with the Communist League and was asked to write a document (with Engels) expounding its aims and beliefs. The result was Marx's most famous work *The Communist Manifesto* published in 1848.
3. Marx and Engels began with the impression that everything in reality is a combination of opposites. An illustration of this point is that electricity is made up of a positive and negative charge. The essential idea is that this coming together



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of opposites in the natural world is the trait which makes every unit auto-dynamic and in motion. It also ensures a constant drive for movement and transformation.

4. According to Lenin, the three axes are:

- (i) The materialist development of Hegel's dialectics
- (ii) The historicity of moral philosophy designed to class conflict
- (iii) The junction of laws of evolution in physics (Helmholtz), biology (Darwin) and in political economics (Marx)

5. Marx differentiated the stages of human history on the basis of their economic regimes and categorized them into four modes of production which he called the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal and the bourgeois.

6. In this kind of society, though the slaves possessed some ownership over land, a major portion of the yield still went to the master. It was the inception of lordship society. In this society, too, there were two conflicting classes - serfs and lords. Lords were superseded by kings or emperors. The serfs laboured and the lords or kings benefited. In order to give sanction to the authority of kings and lords, religion was resorted to.

7. Under capitalism, the nature of the product also changes, i.e., products become commodities - they not only have a use value, but an exchange value as well. In fact, under capitalism, products are produced especially as exchange goods, i.e., trade goods, which makes the use value of the product incidental to and separate from its value as a trade good. Thus for Marx, commodity production isolates the worker as a supplier of only commodity labour.

8. For Marx, bringing fulfillment and meaning to the lives of human beings is entirely dependent on the development and exercise of their essential human powers, whose focus is labour or production.

9. Marxists observe that the 'pure' labour (positioned at the farthest left and region), whose societal position (every one of dissimilar 'intermediate' forms) is not in any way opposed and in opposition to him, and he is by no means 'methodologically' as forms fused together with each other in differently arranged multitude. Alternatively, the sociological observation takes care of the 'pure' labour in addition to the 'pure' industrialist like 'methodological pillars' suspended among the network of transitional classes.

10. The vital theme of the work was class struggle. In it they state that all history is the history of the class struggle: free men and slaves, patricians and plebeians, barons and serfs, master artisans and journeymen.

11. Marx's account of alienation in capitalist society aims at substantiating three principal theses:

- The vast majority of people living under capitalism are alienated.
- The chief causes of this alienation cannot be removed so long as the capitalist mode of production prevails.
- Alienation as a pervasive social phenomenon can and will be abolished in a post-capitalist (socialist or communist) mode of production.

12. Marx does believe that alienation can be developed in a modern, complex and industrialized society. But he is not necessarily committed to denying that there might be causes of alienation other than those specifically identified by his theory. The main burden of Marx's message is that capitalist social relations are the most

pervasive and obvious cause of alienation, which must be abolished first, before lesser or more hidden causes can be dealt with.

4.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a brief biography of Karl Marx.
2. What was the basic difference between the mindsets of Engel and Marx?
3. What is dialectical materialism?
4. Which are Engel's three laws of dialectics?
5. What was the main subject of Marx's Communist Manifesto?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the criticism garnered by Marx's dialectical materialism.
2. Give a detailed assessment of Marx's conception of historical materialism.
3. Discuss Marx's explanation of feudalism.
4. How are capitalism and alienation related? Elaborate.
5. 'Marxian outlook of class portrays the person as a location of conflict.' Explain.

4.8 FURTHER READING

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