M.A.(SOCIOLOGY)

SEMESTER - I

PAPER - I

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

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CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Course Rationale: The course aims at conceptualizing the emergence of sociology within the Enlightenment period. By focusing on the contributions of the founding figures of the discipline, the course aims to highlight the challenges and the debates of the time. Further the course aims to critically analyse the relevance of classical sociology today. The course also aims to establish linkages between classical and contemporary sociology. Students will be expected to read texts in the originals.

Unit I: Karl Marx in the context of Western Modernity

- Philosophical Ideas: Human Nature, Human Potential and the Place of 'Work', Alienation, Historical Method
- Economic Concepts: Critique of Capitalism, Labour Theory of Value, Fetishism of Commodities, Class and Division of Labour
- Political Ideas: Materialist Origins of state, Historical stages of the state, The state and civil society
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- Study of anomie and suicide, shift from psychological to sociological explanations,, social Integration and suicide, forms of Suicide, (reduce)
- Theory of Religion , Sacred and profane,, Elementary Forms of religious life, the totem, Civil Religion
- Legacy of Durkheim/Durkheim today

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- Legacy of Weber/Weber Today

Unit IV: George Simmel in the context of Western Modernity

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- Individual consciousness, Forms and types of Social interaction, Study of Social Structure and objective culture- Case study of secrecy.
- The Philosophy of Money: Money and value, Reification and rationalisation, Tragedy of Culture
- Legacy of Simmel/Simmel Today

Essential Readings:

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1

PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS AND ECONOMIC CONCEPTS

Unit Structure

1.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand 'human nature' and 'human potential' in the philosophical ideas of Karl Marx.
- To familiarize students with Marxian concepts such as 'work' and 'alienation'.
- To know the 'historical method'
- To understand Marx's economic concepts of 'Critique of Capitalism, and 'Labour Theory of Value'
- To explore Marxian understanding of 'Fetishism of Commodities' and 'Class and Division of Labour'.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Karl Heinrich Marx (5 May 1818 – 14 March 1883), a German, was a philosopher, sociologist, historian, economist, besides being a political theorist and renowned social revolutionary. He is famous for his contributions to the socialist movement as well as the school of thought known as Marxism. Marx was highly influenced by the theoretical writings of the famous German philosopher Georg Hegel. His contributions remain the guiding ideology, from the which the social, political and economic thought is derived in Marxism.

Karl Marx's parents were Jewish by birth, but were known to have converted to Protestantism. Notwithstanding this change of faith, the Jewish background continued to influence Marx in a long way. In fact, his critical thinking about the prevalent significance of religion was due to the social discrimination he faced within the Jewish society. Not just religion, his opinion on every social, political and economic aspect of society was shaped by his critical thinking, for instance, his theories of alienation, class struggle, exploitation, labour and so on. More than anything else, Marx was truly a secular intellectual, because of which and his theoretical contributions, he continues to remain one of the most widely read, contested and followed intellectuals till date.

Some of his famous theoretical contributions include *A Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and 'On the Jewish Question' in 1843, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* in 1844, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in 1859, *Das Kapital* first published in 1867; and in collaboration with Frederick Engels, *The Holy Family* in 1845, *The German Ideology* in 1845-7, *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848 (Morrison, 2006), amongst many others. His theoretical contributions, spanning many years, such as historical materialism, alienation, class struggle, wage-labour, surplus, and so on continues as the political and economic legacy of Marx.

As there are many philosophical, economic and political concepts and ideas of Marx that this syllabus intends to elaborate and explain, these are not neat compartments and continue to remain overlapping. For instance, Marx's philosophical assumptions and ideas governed his economic and political understanding. And therefore, Marx's concepts and ideas are put forth in this unit appropriately.

1.2 MARX'S CONCEPTION OF HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN POTENTIAL

With his initial and critical readings of the philosophy, Marx became deeply engaged with the concept of human nature. For Marx, humanity is objectified by its own subjectivity in a dialectical manner, in the universe which is an ultimate process by itself (Tabak, 2012). Therefore, Marx argued that human nature predominantly existed in dialectical and determined by the forces of the existing economic systems. The prevalent economy governs the ways in which humans act and think. As the economy changes, human nature also undergoes a drastic change. There lies the dialectics of human nature – a product of society and economy, instead of biology.

In 1847, Marx published a book titled *The Poverty of Philosophy*, within which he argues with the philosophical and economic notions of French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon through latter's book on 'The Philosophy of Poverty'. While analyzing this work, Churchich (1990) highlights that it is here Marx states "all history is nothing but a

continuous transformation of human nature" (p. 46). There is constant change in our societies, resulting in changing human nature, and this remains the essence of our history.

Marx was in deed greatly influenced [critically] by the German materialist Ludwig Feuerbach, to the extent that Marx rejected Feuerbach's sociobiological understanding of essential human nature. In his 'Theses on Feuerbach', Marx argues why Feuerbach's idea, of human nature being shaped by material or objects only, should be rejected, and that rather the social and economic relations which are constantly changing should be considered important (Karl Marx & Engels, [1845-7] 1998). The whole society, with its economy and production systems tend to shape and re-shape human nature.

In fact, production remained very crucial in Marx's understanding of human nature. For Marx, humans are essentially driven by their socially productive tendencies and that humans constantly strive to produce things that can give them satisfaction for having produced something (K. Marx & Engels, [1894] 2007). Therefore, it is human potential and human nature's need to produce something constantly and that it also results in the production of newer needs. So it remains a continuous process, whereby a need to produce a product eventually can also result in the production of newer needs, further resulting in a satisfying experience. The whole idea of 'alienation' that Marx talks about, also derives from this understanding, which will be dealt in the following sections.

Therefore, instead of materialistic basis of human nature, Marx argues for an social and economic foundation that is driven by the human potential as well as the human need to produce. The creative and intelligent capacity of the humans is something that differentiates them from the animals. Thus the modern economy guides the human potential and human nature to produce certain products and newer needs. It is human nature to realize its innate potential by actively involving in the creation and production of things that can result in satisfaction.

Check Your Progress:

1. What is 'human nature' according to Marx?

1.3 ALIENATION AND CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM

As it remains obvious from Marx's work, he was highly critical of the prevalent capitalist mode of production was the foundation on which the lives of the people were laid. It was within this system, that labourers were considered as mere commodities, that have no feelings. Capitalism gave rise to a small class of individuals that controlled the masses by

virtue of ownership of means of production. The workers instead had nothing but their labour to offer in exchange of money for a livelihood. Capitalism thus becomes the root cause of suffering of the working class. Thus, in developing a critique of capitalism, Marx also put forth the theory of alienation.

Alienation is an historically created phenomenon with its origin and continuity in civilized society arising from the alienation of labor which characterizes all systems of private property from slavery to capitalism (Mandel & Novack, 1973). As wealth remains in the hands of the few, and as workers starve even for their basic needs, the capitalist mode of production creates an unequal, unjust and meaningless society, resulting in the alienation of the workers. As human nature is seen as being creative and productive, capitalism however hampers this urge by transforming workers into machine-like beings.

Thus, capitalism is essentially evil as the human nature loses control over itself, and it comes to be governed by the means of production. The theory of alienation is therefore dependent on the idea of human nature and human potential. The theory of alienation also further derives from Marx's critique of capitalism. Nevertheless, theory of alienation is much more that the essence of human nature itself. Alienation is the manipulation of the workers by the ruling class, for the benefits of the latter. And this manipulation vehemently results in, Marx argues, alienation from one's own product, alienation from the act of producing (human nature), alienation from the other workers or producers and alienation from one's own self (Ollman & Bertell, 1976). The huge profits by the ruling class creates wide gap between themselves and the working class persons. Under this capitalist system of production, it is ensured that the working class continue to remain poor and unimportant.

Even if the workers put more efforts at improving their conditions, the capitalist systems does not allow them to climb up the social and economic ladder. They are used like commodities to increase the profits for the ruling class. Poverty and alienation thus increases amongst the working class persons. Not just that, the capitalist market conditions encourage competition amongst the fellow workers, resulting in the alienation from one's own class people. Capitalist mode of production is a witness to the abject poverty of the working class and thereby their unprecedented alienation.

Labour thus becomes an 'alienated labour'. It is within the system of capitalism to categorically suppress the creative need of human beings to the extent of presenting them as commodities that have meagre value in exchange for their labour. And therefore, Marx professed abolition of capitalism to end this system where a small minority owns and controls the means of production and replacing it with a more just system – a socialist revolution.

Check Your Progress:

1. What is ‘alienation’ in a capitalist society?

1.4 ‘WORK’ AND LABOUR THEORY OF VALUE

The labour theory of value grew out of the ideas of the natural law philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries such as Grotius, Pufendorf, Hobbes, Locke, Quesnay, Hutcheson and Adam Smith, among others who shared a common research agenda, tracing back to antiquity (Dooley, 2005). The labour theory of value predominantly talks about labour and value – the value of labour or how the labour leads to its value. Thus, the classical school, particularly that of Ricardo and Adam Smith, greatly influenced Marx’s approach to labour theory. The place of work also becomes the place of massive exploitation and that the labour is exploited and highly undervalued by the capitalists, is what Marx’s theorization states.

As apparent from the discussion on Marx’s views on ‘human nature’, creativity and production remain central to human beings’ sense of fulfillment. Therefore, ‘work’ and ‘labour’ are extremely crucial in understanding human existence. For Marx, value of an object is nothing but the amount of the labour utilized to produce it. Labour remains significant for Marx and his economics, also because labour is something that is exploited the most under the capitalist system, yet it remains the backbone of any production. As such, Marx’s theory of labour and his critique of capitalism are deeply connected. As the value of a product is because of the labour, Marx proposed that profits derived from such products should necessarily be held by the workers, not by the capitalists.

For Marx, commodities have ‘use value’ and ‘exchange value’ (Morrison, 2006). While the use value of the commodity is determined by unique characteristic of that commodity that creates its demand for giving certain satisfaction, the exchange value of the commodity, usually predominant in the capitalist societies, simply refers to the its quality for being able to command a value in its exchange with a another commodity. Therefore, the use value is said to be the qualitative aspect of labour, whereas, the exchange value is said to be the quantitative aspect – the two-fold character that Marx sees in labour being responsible for the two-fold character he attributes to value (Ollman & Bertell, 1976).

Marx stated that the labour has a ‘dual character’. Marx’s inclusion of this dual character of labour – useful labour and abstract labour - is a diversion from the political economy proposed by Smith and Ricardo (Morrison, 2006). While the useful labour is interconnected with the use value of commodity, the abstract labour is interconnected with the exchange value of the commodity. Thus, labour and its intrinsic worth

remain central to Marx's arguments against the capitalist mode of production.

Check Your Progress:
1. Explain Marx's approach to labour.

1.5 HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Very crucial to Marx's theorization of political economy, was the importance of history. Historical materialism implies that human societies should be understood by studying their history. History is considered as having stages, with varying material conditions. As such, it is the material condition within the historical stages that influence human societies in all matters. The evolution of human societies, thus, takes place due to their material evolution.

Marx and Engels were the first to present a scientific theory of society, based on history and as such created historical materialism by extending and applying philosophical materialism and materialistically revised dialectics to the revolutionary practical activities of the working class, in order to interpret the society (Lorimer, 2006). Karl Marx and Engels ([1845-7] 1998) in *The German Ideology*, thus proposed their ideas on historical materialism – which, according to them, was not a theory of specialized social aspects of life, but rather it dealt with the most general laws of existence for the historically determined socioeconomic formations.

Marx was deeply influenced by Georg Hegel, as the latter was famous for his philosophical doctrine known as philosophical idealism – significance of ideas in history. However, for Marx, while human transformation throughout history was crucial, the materialist perspective that he added became a new interpretative framework for understanding history (Morrison, 2006). Simply put, the material conditions define human existence, throughout history. Thus, Marx rejected 'idealism' and promoted 'materialism' to argue that the basic material needs of the human beings drive them to produce, which in turn accounts for its development and evolution.

Marx's materialistic theory of history remains the antithesis of the Hegel's idealistic theory of history. There are four fundamental concepts that are central to the materialistic theory of history: (a) the means of production, (b) the relations of production, (c) the mode of production, and (d) the forces of production (Morrison, 2006). These concepts remain the foundation of this theory.

Marx also identified four different economic stages of ownership –

(a) tribal or primitive communism, (b) slavery, (c) feudal society, and (d) industrial capitalist society (Bober, 1950). The human society is believed to have evolved from these stages of historical and material significance. Marx also proposed 'socialism' to be the next stage of the human society in order to overcome all the fallacies of the previous stages, particularly the adversaries of the woring class in the capitalist society.

Check Your Progress:
1. Explain Marx's contribution to the theory of history.

1.6 FETISHISM OF COMMODITIES

Karl Marx and Engels ([1845-7] 1998), in their *Critique of Political Economy* formulated 'commodity fetishism' to show that commodities' exchange value is derived from its economic value and not the social relations that are utilized to produce it. There are no social relationships between the people, but there are economic relationships between the commodities and its economic worth in terms of money, that matter in the market situations.

The 'fetishism of commodities' refers to the misconception of the people for the products of labour once they enter exchange (Ollman & Bertell, 1976). As a reification, the exchange value of the commodity, in monetary terms, gets personified so as to have an equivalent for the exchange, by negating its use-value. Commodity fetishism thus remains a cognitive illusion arising from market transactions (Elster, 1986). As capitalism takes on a life of its own, through fetishism of commodities, human 'reify' their social interrelationships upon the commodities, in economic terms.

Check Your Progress:
1. What is 'fetishism of commodity'?

1.7 CLASS AND DIVISION OF LABOUR

Marx's theory of class is based on the relations of domination and exploitation in production and therefore, look upon the class struggle. As there are classes of people with conflicting interests, there arises a situation to combat it. For Marx, class is an actual group of persons with a common interest and economic condition. Marx argued, classes are not

differentiated merely by income and occupations of their members, but instead what constitutes class is the *work context*, and not the work itself (Elster, 1986). The dominant class is the owner of means of production and the working class only serves the dominant class.

In *Communist Manifesto*, published in 1848, while outlining the concept of class, class struggle and class formation, Marx gives several characteristics for describing the concept of class: (a) all societies have the historical tendency to divide themselves into two unequal social classes, (b) all classes are structured in a hierarchy with superordinate and subordinate socio-economic privileges, (c) classes are always engaged in a 'historical struggle' resulting in a ruin of these classes, (d) in each economic stage, a given population transforms into a class depending upon the prevailing economic conditions, and (e) the transformation of people into a class thus creates a common set of interests that define their class situation finally leading to a class struggle (Morrison, 2006).

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx writes the disastrous effects of machinery and the division of labor how owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and consequently all charm for the workman (Wendling, 2009). For Marx, the division of labour, within the capitalist society, creates enmity amongst the people by creating and upholding massive class differences.

For Marx, due to division of labour, the capitalist society is able to separate workers from their final products as the labour required to produce it is itself broken down and thus the workers lose control over their products as well as the markets where these are exchanged for money. This division of labour influences the way workers experience their work, their creation, resulting in ultimate alienation from the work, the product and fellow beings.

Marx emphasized that modern production more and more required cooperation, division of labour, and social production; and that the expression "the division of labour" can be interpreted either as division of labour in general or as a particular division of labour in a specific historical and social period. (Ware, 2019). However, division of labour eventually becomes a standardized method of exploitation.

Check Your Progress:

1. What is 'division of labour'?

1.8 SUMMARY

Karl Marx has been regarded as the one of the most prolific writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His significant contributions include the theory of alienation, labour theory of value, theory of class and class struggle, critique of capitalism, *Das Kapital* and Communist Manifesto, amongst many others, which were published posthumously.
Marx's ideas and ideology have influenced the intellectual thought throughout the world. Also, what is worth knowing is the fact there are contestations amongst the Marxists themselves with special reference to interpreting and applying his concepts and ideas.

1.9 QUESTIONS

1. Explain 'human nature' from a Marxian perspective.
2. Elaborate on the 'Critique of Capitalism'.
3. What is 'Historical Materialism'?
4. Explain the theory of class.

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2

POLITICAL IDEAS AND THE LEGACY OF MARX TODAY

Unit Structure

2.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand the political ideas of Marx
- To understand the state and civil society in Marxian thought
- To explore the contemporary legacy of Marx

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As we have seen it, Marx remains one of the most widely read as well as contested scholar. Not just between the Marxian and non-Marxian scholars, there are serious cleavages between various Marxian scholars as well. Yet, despite all this, Marx continues to remain an all-time-favourite scholar and writer, almost as popular as religious/political leaders.

Marx is known for his contributions to sociology, economics, political economy, and so on. In addition to observing firsthand the emergence of the industrial worker and the development of capitalism in Europe and England, there have been a number of key influences shaping Marx's conception of society and history at the time. These influences have led to several theoretical developments which have been very significant to the formation of Marx's overall view of society and history, and of these at least two stand out: first, was Marx's break with Hegel's idealist philosophy which helped him devise a method that was suitable to the study of society and history which was formally outside philosophy; second, was the introduction of materialism and the materialist outlook as a strong theoretical perspective for looking at the formation of historical societies (Morrison, 2006).

Marx's political philosophy is his view on the nature of political

relations and the general law of its development, including political value, political system and political ideal. In fact, as the research on Marx has suggested, Marx has brought great changes to modern political theory, which is to transfer the central field of politics from the traditional state and law to the economic field. By revealing the nature of power oppression of capitalist economy, a new field of political theory is opened up, and the core content is the theory of class and class struggle (Lai, 2020).

2.2 MATERIALIST ORIGINS OF STATE

Marx's political ideas in fact were laid down as soon as he introduced the materialist perspective for looking at the formation of historical societies. With his materialist perspective, Marx was able to show that the very first act of all societies was always economic because human beings had to satisfy their everyday material needs much before anything else. Thus, this premise becomes the major theoretical perspective for looking at the social and historical development of societies from the point of view of their economic production and the division into social classes (Morrison, 2006).

From the perspective of theoretical value, Marx's political philosophy has achieved the unity of scientific and revolutionary nature, ideal and practical nature of political philosophy. The concept of people-oriented governance, the pursuit of fairness and justice, and the political ideal of human liberation embodied the advanced value concept of Marx's political philosophy. Marx's political philosophy based on his optimistic understanding of human nature, and then attributed the root of human social conflicts to social production relations (Lai, 2020).

As a theoretical system, Marxism has constituted the principal alternative to the liberal rationalism that has dominated western culture and intellectual enquiry in the modern period. As a political force, in the form of the international communist movement, Marxism has also been seen as the major enemy of western capitalism, at least in the period 1917–91 (Heywood, 2019).

In an early writing entitled Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* published in 1843, Marx undertook a critical revision of Hegel's political philosophy, which eventually led to one of Marx's first systematic discussions of the state. Later on, in his work 'On the Jewish Question', Marx looked at the relationship between civil society and the development of modern state. In 1851, Marx undertook a historical study of the state in his work called *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and finally in 1871, in a work entitled *The Civil War in France*, he focused on the development of the French political state (Morrison, 2006).

Marx's basic conception of the state is stated in his famous piece *Communist Manifesto* arguing that it is the repressive arm of the

bourgeoisie and, as a set of institutions, takes on a wide range of functions corresponding to the needs of capital and/or interests of the capital class (as cited in Wetherly, 2005, p.17). One can't find any distinctive theory of the state in Marx's studies. Rather, he uses a traditional conception of the state in his theory of the history. Marx thus analyses different modes of production as well as forces of productions that create different relations of production along a continuum throughout history. Marx places the state within the realm of superstructure in his famous base and superstructure metaphor (Wetherly, 2005, p. 11).

The fact that there is no explicit theory of the state by Marx has led many social scientists to evaluate his conception of the state from different perspectives. One of the most common ideas is that the state is the result of the existence of different classes in Marx's ideology as put forward by Giddens & Held (1982). In general terms, Marx argues that classes are the creation of history and they will disappear in the future. Classes only arise when a surplus value is generated because it then becomes possible for non-producers to live off the productivity of the others (p. 4). So, one can inevitably expect to encounter a great amount of attributions to the emergence and significance of classes while studying Marx's conception of the state.

Marx's work *The German Ideology* set in the context for outlining some of the historical as well as the materialist principles of state development. In fact, the assertion by Marx that the state has a historical origin is explicitly discussed in the 1859 preface to *A Critique of Political Economy*, whereby he argues that the central features of the state grow out of the economic base of society and that the state is not independent of the economic foundations of society. Thus, within the scope of this reasoning, not only does the economic base give rise to the superstructure of the society and its institutional configuration, but as the productive system changes so does the political and legal superstructure of the state (Morrison, 2006).

The scope and limits of the theory of history are more confined than Marxist state theory taken as a whole. This is because the relevant historical materialist concept is the 'legal and political superstructure' rather than the state. The theory of the state is contained within the theory of history to the extent that the state is contained within the superstructure, and it is so only partially. The superstructure might be something more than the state, and there might be more to the state than what is included in the superstructure (Wetherly, 2005).

The superstructure consists of non-economic phenomena, but only such phenomena as are economically relevant. This means only those phenomena that are functionally explained by the needs (or functional requirements) of the economic base. Thus non-economic phenomena are defined as superstructural only in virtue of being causally related in a certain way (i.e. functionally) to the economic structure. According to

Elster 'the central question in the Marxist theory of the state is whether it is autonomous with respect to class interests, or entirely reducible to them' (Elster, 1986, p. 402). However this way of presenting Marx's views is unhelpful because it suggests a false dualism or even antithesis. Elster's 'central question' actually conflates two, and each is most fruitfully posed not in 'eitheror' but 'both-and' terms (Wetherly, 2005).

Two broad conclusions can be drawn from Marx's perspective on state formation. First, economic production shapes social and class relations and hence the political structure of society. Second, economic production gives rise to a legal and political superstructure which comes to represent the productive relations. And therefore, taking Marx's materialist theory into account, the political structure of society and later the state, always reflect the prevailing class interests and is never independent of them (Morrison, 2006).

Check Your Progress

1. What is the inter-relationship between the state and superstructure, in a Marxian understanding?

2.3 HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THE MODERN STATE

The materialist origin of the political institutions led Marx to focus on the historical formation of the state. As we saw, Marx's early writings on the state were formulated as a critique of Hegel's political and social philosophy. Hegel understood the modern state to be the embodiment of rationality and universality as developed over the course of human history. Marx's critique rested on the claim that by locating universality and equality in the bourgeois constitutional state (*Rechtsstaat*), Hegel inverted the relationship between the state and civil society.

Marx traced the growing separation between civil society and the state as part of the transition from the estate and guild societies of the late medieval period to the consolidation of mercantile capitalist society in eighteenth century northwestern Europe. Marx's analysis of the state thus spanned two related but nevertheless distinct standpoints: the philosophical perspective of his earlier writing, where the state is a juridical fiction that masks the class interests openly expressed in civil society, and a historical-political perspective where it is a social relation that reproduces a specific balance of forces in society. Although this has been explained as the gap between the young and the mature Marx, there are also certain continuities. Namely, the overcoming of political alienation by the eventual reabsorption of the state into society — what Engels later called the "withering away" or dying out the state —

reappears in later writings such as *The Civil War in France*.

Marx, Engels and their followers (particularly Lenin) had no faith on the social contract theory as the origin of state. They have viewed the origin from a materialistic' standpoint which emphasizes that though the state is the creation of man, behind this there is no emotion, idea but the influence of material conditions which they termed as economic conditions. They have divided the development of society into old communist social system, slave society, feudal society and industrial society. In the old communist society there was no state because there was no existence of private property. The system of private property worked as a potential cause of the rise of state. The owners of private property felt insecurity as to its protection and they felt the necessity of a super power which could provide protection ultimately.

Check Your Progress:
1. How did the system of private property helped the creation of state?

2.4 THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

There is some similarity between this idea of alienated politics and the view of the state as a 'parasitic institution' which exploits and oppresses civil society. Although this view is expressed in both *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and *The Civil War in France*,12 it essentially belongs to the critique of Hegel where Marx argues that 'the state becomes the private property of officials in their struggle for self-advancement' (Jessop, 1977, p. 354) and predates the development of a class theory of state (Wetherly, 2005).

The Marxist theory of the state involves economic determination as its principle of explanation. This is a version of a 'society-centred' view of the state that places emphasis on external (located in society) causal influences. Of course, Marxism is not the only version of a society centred theory as other traditions in state theory, notably pluralism, share this approach.1 All such theories utilize a conception of the state as institutionally differentiated from 'civil society'. The distinctiveness of Marxism derives from the emphasis it places on causal influences rooted in the nature of the economic structure, coupled with its distinctive characterization of capitalist relations of production (*ibid*).

Marx borrowed the term 'civil society' from Hegel's writings. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel had asserted that the state rises above self interest by mediating it through the universal interest. Marx fundamentally rejected this view as he saw the state promoting itself through its defense

of private property and its ultimate alignment with the ruling classes. And subsequently, Marx turned his attention to the historical development of civil society (Morrison, 2006).

Marx saw the solution of problems posed by the eighteenth-century theorists of civil society not in the division between civil society and the state but in its eradication. This abolition was viewed by Marx as a future desideratum to be achieved after the Revolution. A future unity of human existence and thus true freedom might be achieved only through the negation of the distinction between civil society and the state and 'dissolution' of the latter. Marx was very critical of a positive concept of civil society: 'Marx accepted Hegel's account of civil society, especially its darker aspects.

According to Marx, political revolution, which followed the rise of commercial society, abolished the people from the community and thus the political character of civil society. Political emancipation reduces man as an independent individual to a member of civil society or to a citizen, a moral person. With Marx the theory of civil society reaches its end. He accepted Hegel's account of civil society but rejected his account of two other spheres of social life, family and the state. According to Marx, in society as a whole, viewed as bourgeois society, people treat each other primarily as means to their own ends and the class solidarity is exceptionally weak.

Marx believed that civil society brought about the breakdown of the individual's relation to the wider society by fragmenting the whole of society into political and civil parts. While Hegel saw civil society and the political state as separate, Marx saw them as one and the same (Morrison, 2006).

Check Your Progress

1. What is civil society according to Marx?

2.5 MARX'S LEGACY

An interesting question is *whether Marx remains useful* for us today. Which of Marx's theories are hopelessly dated or dead, and which remain a source of new ideas and hypotheses? The development of Marx's doctrine after his death first followed the course of a mainstream, the Second International, and then divided into two separate currents, Soviet Marxism and Western Marxism. The story of these developments is, by and large, a depressing one. Although the Marxist movement has produced some great political leaders, there have been no outstanding thinkers after

Marx. Moreover, the propensity of some political leaders to believe themselves great thinkers and their ability to impose this view on others have had a permanently stultifying effect on intellectual life in the communist countries (Elster, 1986).

We can think of Marx as the great-grandfather of today's anti-capitalist movement. Of course, much has changed. For example, Marx seems to have assumed that natural resources were inexhaustible, and thus he has a much more limited ecological perspective than one would expect today. But on the other hand Marx portrays a world in which the capitalist market comes to permeate society, putting a price on everything and crowding out non-economic forms of value (Wolff, 2003).

Reading Marx, though, is a task to be handled with care. Although sometimes regarded as a great stylist—and perhaps he is by the standards of contemporary economists and social theorists—reading the texts can be dispiriting. His great masterpiece, *Capital* Volume 1 begins with page after dry page on the definition and nature of the commodity (although patience is eventually rewarded). Perhaps *The Communist Manifesto*, jointly written with Engels, is his most widely read work. This is much more accessible, but its polemical tone does not do the depth of Marx's thought real justice (*ibid*).

Owing to theoretical disputes or political events, interest in Marx's work has fluctuated over time and gone through indisputable periods of decline. From the early twentieth century "crisis of Marxism" to the dissolution of the Second International, and from debates on the contradictions of Marx's economic theory to the tragedy of "actually existing socialism", criticism of the ideas of Marx seemed persistently to point beyond the conceptual horizon of Marxism. Yet there has always been a return to Marx". A new need develops to refer to his work – whether the critique political economy, the formulations on alienation, or the brilliant pages of political polemic – and it has continued to exercise an irresistible fascination for both followers and opponents.

So, Marx's grandest theories are not substantiated. But he is not to be abandoned. His writings are among the most powerful in the Western intellectual tradition, and, true or false, they are to be appreciated and admired. But further, he does say many true and inspiring things. His work is full of insight and illumination. We have found many such examples. Marx remains the most profound and acute critic of capitalism, even as it exists today (Wolff, 2003).

Check Your Progress

1. What is Marx's relevance in contemporary society?

2.6 SUMMARY

Through this module, we saw the perspective of Marx on the formation of a state as well as the civil society. Also, despite the failure of communist regimes, the magic of Marxian thought has definitely not faded. This is to the extent that no scholarly sociological as well as economics one can be completely without considering Marx and his significant contributions.

2.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. What is 'state' for Marx?
2. What are the historical stages in development of states?
3. What is civil society?
4. Does Marxism have a future?

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3

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

Unit Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand the methodological contribution of Durkheim.
- To understand the division of labour work of Emile Durkheim.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will look into Durkheim's Social fact which is his methodological contribution to sociology. In addition, functionalist perspective which he has been also influenced.

3.2 SOCIAL FACT

In order to help sociology, move away from philosophy and to give it a clear and separate identity, in *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895/1982), Durkheim argued that it is the special task of sociology to study what he called *social facts* (Nielsen, 2005a, 2007a). He understood social facts as forces (Takla and Pope, 1985) and structures that are external to, and coercive of, the individual.

Durkheim differentiated between two types of social facts—material and nonmaterial. Although he dealt with both in the course of his

work, his main focus was on *nonmaterial social facts* (for example, culture, social institutions) rather than *material social facts* (for example, bureaucracy, law). Social facts are the ways of acting, thinking and feeling which possess the remarkable property of existing outside the consciousness of the individual. It is a kind of public conscience in which individuals are trained in the society[i]. Social facts are also 'sui generis' which means its own kind, it is unique. Social fact has to be seen different from that of biological and psychological events.

Durkheim gave two ways of defining a social fact so that sociology is distinguished from psychology. First, a social fact is experienced as an external constraint rather than an internal drive; second, it is general throughout the society and is not attached to any particular individual. Social facts have control over individuals. These act as guides and controls of conduct for the members of society. It is also external in individual. For e.g. Norms, mores, folkways.

Snell, Patricia (2018) notes that a social fact according to Durkheim consists of collective thoughts and shared expectations that influence individual actions. Examples of social facts include social roles, norms, laws, values, rituals, and customs. Violating social facts confirms their existence because people who act against social facts are typically sanctioned.

A social fact is an idea, force, or "thing" that influences the ways individuals act and the kinds of attitudes people hold. As a social subject, these facts are not particular to a single individual but are rather "supra-individual," meaning they are held in the minds of multiple people and culminate in the "collective conscience." Social fact is considered within the minds of an individual, it originates outside of an individual and is experienced and expressed by more than one person. For e.g. When you think of a cab driver in India or in England, the roles and duties and the image comes in front of you. So, this is social fact. The duties and the norms, roles etc.

Social facts impose themselves upon people, individuals feel compelled to conform to their implicit expectations. When people violate those expectations, they often experience a sanction, which is a form of punishment[ii].Ritzer notes that Durkheim also distinguished between the normal and the pathological within the sphere of social facts. Phenomena such as crime and suicide are normal for a society if they correspond to its type of social organization and level of development. For example, crime is normal in a society that also prizes individual innovation, and no progress would be possible without the actions of criminals who represent in their individual person the new cultural tendencies and provide a focus for new outlets for emerging currents of public opinion[iii]. Studying social facts which help in understanding the society better and even to build a framework for developing the society.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss the social fact as methodology given by Durkheim.

2. According to you, is social fact as a methodology applicable to understand society ?

3.3 DIVISION OF LABOUR

The first edition of Emile Durkheim's 'The division of labour in society: a study of the organization of the higher societies was published in 1893. It was his doctorate dissertation[iv]. Durkheim first used the phrase *division of labour* in a sociological sense in his discussion of social evolution.[v].

To use Durkheim words',"Social harmony comes essentially from the division of labour. It is characterized by a cooperation which is automatically produced through the pursuit in each individual of his own interests. It suffices that each individual consecrate himself to a special function in order, by the force of events, to make himself solidarity with others."[vi]

Durkheim stated that specialization arose from changes in social structure caused by an assumed natural increase in the size and density of population and a corresponding increase in competition for survival. Division of labour functioned to keep societies from breaking apart under these conditions (ii). Through division of labour Durkheim tries to look into the relation between individual and society.

During Durkheim times the French Revolution had taken place which was a voice against the control of traditional authority and religious beliefs. There was crisis in the society. Comte developed sociology to understand this chaos to bring back order, cohesion in the society. Durkheim too tries to understand this complexity and gives his theory.

The core idea of the Division of Labour is that modern society is not held together by the similarities between people who work in the same way. However, it is the division of labour that brings people together by making them dependent on each other. Durkheim argued that "the economic services that it can render are insignificant compared with the moral effect that it produces and its true function is to create between two

or more people a feeling of solidarity." Durkheim wanted to how social solidarity operated in the real life of members of society. Hence, he developed the concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity. Let us look into its details.

3.4 MECHANICAL SOLIDARITY

Mechanical solidarity is the social integration of members of a society who have common values and beliefs. These common values and beliefs constitute a "collective conscience" that works internally in individual members to cause them to cooperate. Because, in Durkheim's view, the forces causing members of society to cooperate were much like the internal energies causing the molecules to cohere in a solid, he drew upon the terminology of physical science in coining the term *mechanical solidarity*.

3.5 ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

Organic solidarity is social integration that arises out of the need of individuals for one another's services. In a society characterized by organic solidarity, there is relatively greater division of labour, with individuals functioning much like the interdependent but differentiated organs of a living body. Society relies less on imposing uniform rules on everyone and more on regulating the relations between different groups and persons, often through the greater use of contracts and laws[vii].

People in modern society perform a relatively narrow range of tasks, they need many other people in order to survive. The primitive family headed by father-hunter and mother–food gatherer is practically self-sufficient, but the modern family needs the grocer, baker, butcher, auto mechanic, teacher, police officer, and so forth. These people, in turn, need the kinds of services that others provide in order to live in the modern world. Modern society, in Durkheim's view, is thus held together by the specialization of people and their need for the services of many others. This specialization includes not only that of individuals but also of groups, structures, and institutions. The society operates in the below given form[viii]

Solidarity	Volume	Intensity	Rigidity	Content
Mechanical	Entire society	High	High	Religious
Organic	Particular groups	Low	Low	Moral individualism

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss in few lines about division of labour.

2. Explain mechanical and organic solidarity in few lines.

3.6 COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE

Collective conscience means shared understandings, norms, and beliefs. According to Durkheim primitive societies had a stronger collective conscience. The increasing division of labour has caused a disturbance of the collective conscience. The collective conscience is of much less significance in a society with organic solidarity than it is in mechanical solidarity. People in modern society are more likely to be held together by the division of labour which resulted in functions performed by others than by a shared and powerful collective conscience. Organic societies also have a collective consciousness, though in a weaker form which allows for greater individual differences.

In a society characterized by mechanical solidarity, the collective conscience covers virtually the entire society and all its members; it is believed in with great intensity; it is extremely rigid; and its content is highly religious in character. In a society with organic solidarity, the collective conscience is limited to particular groups; it is adhered to with much less intensity; it is not very rigid; and its content is the elevation of the importance of the individual to a moral precept (v).

3.7 RESTITUTIVE AND REPRESSIVE LAW

Durkheim stated that there are two kinds of law which operates in both the mechanical and organic solidarity i.e., Restitutive and Repressive. Mechanical solidarity is characterized by repressive law as people are bonded more closely. There is more of collective consciousness. The restitutive law is very severe in nature the violator is punished severely.

In contrast in the organic solidarity the individuals are dealt with restitutive law. Here there is scope for correction. The crime is seen and treated as an act by an individual. (Emotions are given less importance). Most people do not react emotionally to a breach of the law as there is a weak common morality. (instead of one in bracket use this line)

3.8 SUMMARY

Thus, Durkheim gives his methodology of social fact which could

be used to understand society. Durkheim also argues in 'The Division of Labour' that the form of moral solidarity has changed in modern society, not disappeared. We have a new form of solidarity that allows for more interdependence and closer, less competitive relations and that produces a new form of law based on restitution.

3.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Explain the concept of Social fact.
2. Explain Division of Labour and Mechanical & organic solidarity.

3.10 REFERENCE & FURTHER READINGS

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4

THEORY OF SUICIDE, RELIGION AND LEGACY OF DURKHEIM TODAY

Unit structure

4.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand about Suicide from Emile Durkheim perspective.
- To understand views of religion from Emile Durkheim.
- To apply views of Durkheim to the contemporary world and issues.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Emile Durkheim is one of the important classical sociologist. Many of his work is relevant even today. In this chapter we will study about two topics firstly theory of suicide and secondly about Durkheim work on religion and its relevance today.

4.2 THEORY OF SUICIDE

According to Durkheim, '*Suicide is applied to all cases of death*

resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result'.

From generation suicide is considered to be one of the personal act, that a person may exhibit. Durkheim believed that if he was able to explain suicide with the help of sociology, it would be easy to extend and link sociology to private/personal phenomenon.

Durkheim being a sociologist was interested in studying the reason behind the rate of suicide in a particular community than the reason why a particular person commits suicide. He explained the differences in suicidal rates, and he was interested in finding out the reason behind the higher rate of suicide in one community than the other. He believed that a psychologist and biological factors can very well explain why a person commits suicide but only the social facts reveal the reason why one particular group had higher rate of suicide.

4.2.1 Integration and Regulation:

The theory of Durkheim on suicide can be very well understood if we examine the link between the types of suicide and the rooted social facts namely integration and regulation. Integration means the bond that a person has with his/her society. Regulation means the restrictions that a person has on people. For Durkheim suicide is dependent on integration and regulation variables, and suicide rate may rise if either of them is too low or too high. High integration and low integration may result in altruistic and egoistic suicide respectively. And high regulation and low regulation results in fatalistic and anomic suicide respectively. Let us now look into the different types of suicide.

4.2.2 Altruistic Suicide:

When society imposes upon the individual. The individual personality has little value in the larger scheme. The individual attaches his identity, his whole self to the group and when he or she commits suicide that is altruistic suicide. It is out of obligatory, too much of social integration, attachment, towards the social group. It also out of sense of honor, duty attached to the group. Altruistic suicide is more likely to occur when "social integration is too strong" (Durkheim, 1897/1951:217). The individual is literally forced into committing suicide. More generally, those who commit altruistic suicide do so because they feel that it is their duty to do so. For e.g.- In the Titanic movie when the captain doesn't step outside the ship however, he remains in the same room even when the ship is about to submerge. It is due to the attachment towards to the material object ship (this could possible because of the high integration of the captain towards the material object ship and he felt it was his failure that as a captain he couldn't protect his passengers).

4.2.3. Egoistic Suicide:

This type of suicide takes place when the individual feels alienated

from the group. The social integration in this category is comparatively less. There is a lack of sense of belonging on the part of the individual. Durkheim believed that lack of integration may result in egoistic suicide because the person may feel that he/she does not belong to the larger society. it can also be interpreted as the society is not the part of the individual. He believed that the better part of a human being such as the morality, values and sense of purpose are due to the larger society. the larger society also helps to heal the daily chaos and provides us with moral support. Without the help of society a person cannot survive for a long run and he/she may commit suicide for smaller disappointments. Therefore, he believes that egoistic suicides are more prone to happen in societies where integration is less.

Due to the differences in social integration, there will be difference in social currents as well. These difference in social currents may end up in difference in suicidal rates. Politics is generally seen as a domination of futility and morality is more often seen as a personal choice. It can be viewed as strongly integrated society discourage suicide on a great extend. If a society have high integration the social currents produced will discourage egoistic suicides. It also provides people with the meaning of lives.

Durkheim states that religion safeguard man from self harm/ self destruction. An amount of belief and practices constitute religion which is followed by most of the people. If a person is highly committed to religion, he will be highly integrated to the religious community and thus he will have higher support system. Therefore, he will not be in a state of self destruction for smaller frustrations. But, Durkheim states that not all the religions provide equal support for people. The religion which focuses on the individual rather than worshiping provide less integration of the community members therefore the protection of the people from self destruction is less. From this it is clear that the importance is of the degree of integration and not on the belief and rituals.

The statistics developed by Durkheim states that people who are unmarried tends to have less social integration and therefore suicide rates go up. In the time of crisis such as war, pandemic, etc the value of life is known to the people and suicide rates are comparatively less during these times. Therefore, it can be summarized as increased feeling of integration help person to resist suicidal ideation.

Check Your Progress

1. Explain Egoistic Suicide.

2. State in few lines about social regulation and integration

4.2.4 Anomic Suicide:

Anomic suicide is likely to happen when the regulatory powers of the society are disturbed. Such disturbances are likely to leave individuals frustrated because their desires, which are free to run wild in an insatiable race for pleasure, have little power. The rate of anomic suicides are likely to increase irrespective of the positive and negative disruption. Both positive and negative disruptions have an adverse effect on the individuals. Such conditions put people in new situations that old norms are no longer viable and new norms are yet to develop. The currents of anomie are depended on the periods of disruption and these would result in the higher rate of anomic suicide. For example- During economic depression people who are employed in a factory would be affected and would probably ends up in unemployment. This unemployment would make the person vulnerable to the after effects of currents of anomie and prone to self destruction.

The effect of economic boom is difficult to imagine. Durkheim suggests that immediate success often pull people from the traditional systems they were practicing. This sudden shift may force the people to take up new job, find new partners, and eventually to change the standard of living. All these new changes will hinder the regulations and make the people vulnerable to anomic social currents. In such a scenario, the actions of people are freed from control, and even their dreams are no longer held back. There seem to be endless opportunities for people in an economic boom, and "reality seems valueless compared to the dreams of fevered imaginations."

The high rate of anomic suicide during deregulation of social life are constant with Durkheim's view on the effect of individual passion free from external disruptions. Those people will become slaves of passion and in Durkheim's view will commit suicide.

4.2.5 Fatalistic Suicide:

This type of suicide is a little discussed by Durkheim in the footnote of suicide. Fatalistic and anomic suicide are dependent on regulations. While anomic suicide is dependent on lack of regulation, fatalistic suicide occurs due to excessive regulation. Those people who are likely to commit fatalistic suicide are "persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline." For e.g. A slave who takes up his life because of the hopelessness that he had due to the oppressive controlling of his every action. Too much of

controlling/regulation may result in the increased rate of fatalistic suicide.

As mentioned above the social currents seriously affect the rate of suicide happening ion a particular area. Individual suicides are affected by those social currents such as egoism, altruism, anomie, and fatalism. The social currents dominate the decision of the individuals and the rate of suicide of a particular community can only be explained with the help of social currents.

4.3 ELEMENTARY FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Randall Collins and Michael Makowsky call it "perhaps the greatest single book of the twentieth century." In his book Durkheim included the sociology of religion and the theory of knowledge. Through this book Durkheim tried to find out the enduring essence of religion by an analysis of its ancient primitive forms. Durkheim's theory of knowledge tried to fill the gap between basic categories of human thought and the social origins. He was a genius to find connection between the most puzzled concepts. Though his book he found the essence of religion. This connection is created through rituals and beliefs that translate the moral power of the society to religious symbols that helps people to integrate themselves. His argument is that this moral bond becomes a cognitive bond because the kinds of understanding such as time, classification, causation and space are all extracted from religious rituals.

Society as an institution defines certain process as sacred and other as profane. Those activities which are set termed as sacred, which are set aside from the everyday contribute toward forming the religion. The rest of the activities are categorized as profane which include the commonplace, the utilitarian, the mundane aspects of life. Religion is the system through which the society becomes aware of itself.

Together society is a power which binds the individuals together and which supports the individuals in difficult times. It helps in reducing our selfish tendencies, take out the negative energies and fills us with positive energy. According to Durkheim he sees "only society transfigured and symbolically expressed".

4.4 BELIEFS, RITUALS AND CHURCH

The differences between sacred and profane and the increase of some elements of social life to sacred are important but are not necessary condition to the development of religion. Three other conditions are needed for the same. Firstly, the set of religious belief should develop over a course of time. These religious beliefs "the representations which express the nature of sacred things and the relations which they sustain, either with each other or with profane things" Secondly, a number of religious rituals are needed. These are "the rules of conduct which

prescribe how a man should comport himself in the presence of these sacred objects". Lastly, a religion requires a space for moral community for example a worshiping place like church. These three conditions helped Durkheim to develop the definition of religion; "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them".

The second and third conditions are really important in the theory of Durkheim because they help in connecting the social and individual practices. Durkheim often thinks that the social currents are taken up by the individuals through some ways, but in his theory he very well explains the process in which it really works. Individuals get to know more about religion by engaging in the activities of the church community. The social currents are kept in the group through keeping the collective memory of the group.

4.5 PRIMITIVE (INDIGENOUS) RELIGIOUS FORMS

The main source of his data was from Arunta, a clan-based Australian Tribe. He believed that the tribe was of a primitive culture. But currently there are tribes that are found to be more primitive than Arunta. The first reason why he wanted to study religion in a primitive culture is because he believed that primitive cultures have less developed ideologies and system, so that he can study easily as compared to the modern ideologies and systems. In primitive society the religious forms can be understood from their nudity and it requires only the slightest effort to study them as well. While in the case of modern society religion forms diverse groups and it is possible difficult to study all. This concept made him to relate the common beliefs to common structures of society.

Durkheim choose primitive religion because a non-modern society could be tapped easily by their collective conscience. But when the religion becomes specialized it is difficult to study the religion in narrow domain. On the other hand other institutions represents other aspect of collective morality. The various collective representations of modern society have their origin in all encompassing religion of the primitive society.

4.6 TOTEMISM

Durkheim like to believe that society is the source of religion and that is the reason why he was interested in studying more about totemism. It is the system of religion in which certain animals and plants are regarded as sacred and as the emblems of clan. He viewed totemism as the primitive and simplest form of religion and he associated it with the simple form of social organization, namely clan.

Durkheim states that totem is the representation of clan itself. In a

gathering if people experience heightened energy of social force, it seeks some explanation for the state. He like to believe that the reason for the heightened energy is the social gathering itself. But today also people believe to pay the attribute to social forces. But in reality, the member of the clan attributes the heightened energy as the symbol of clan. The totems are the material symbolization of the non material forces which is at their base. And the nonmaterial force discussed above is the society itself. Totemism and religion are derived from morality and impersonal forces and they are not the mythical material forces as articulated and believed by the community members.

Durkheim's interpretation was questioned by different people. Totemism is not the most primitive religion, but it can help to develop theory that binds religion, knowledge and society. a society may have a large number of totem but Durkheim viewed each totem as interrelated set of ideologies that give the society a complete representation of the world. In totemism, three things are connected namely, the totemic symbol, animal or plant, and the member of the clan. Thus, Durkheim was able to state that the ability to categorize nature into cognitive categories were extracted from religious and social experiences. After all the society develops its own ways for categorizing nature and its symbols.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss in few lines about Elementary forms of religious life book.

2. State in few lines about Totemism from Durkheim view point.

4.7 COLLECTIVE EFFERVESCENCE

There were times in the past where the fundamental and cognitive categories were altered. Durkheim calls this alteration as collective effervescence. The notion of this particular concept is not well written in Durkheim's works. It was rooted in his mind that collectivity in any community would be able to achieve altered or highlighted level of collective exaltation that can even lead to alteration in the structure of society. Collective effervescence is referred to formative moments in social development and they are social facts by birth.

To collectively conclude Durkheim's theory of religion, the source of religion is society, god, the difference between sacred and profane. In reality we can state that god, sacred and the society are same. Durkheim proved this through a study on primitive tribe and which shows that it is

followed even today even though there are complexities in the modern society. To conclude with the Durkheim's sociology of knowledge, he state that basic concepts and the fundamental categories are the representations that society put forth (initially through rituals). And we can conclude that society and an individual are connected by religion and its related rituals.

4.8 LEGACY OF DURKHEIM TODAY

Durkheim describes a lack of social norms in a time with sudden industrialization and mass movement of families into urban areas. This resulted for him in a breakdown of the ties between individuals and their community and, thus a fragmentation of their social identity and a feeling of isolation (Boundless, 2014).

The recent pandemic period showed how the norms where broken where crisis was everywhere in the society. Everyone looked at each other with sense of doubt than respect and the companionship. The pandemic crisis also revealed the role of government. The marginalized population who suffered the most when they were walking or taking whatever means available to go back to their home town. This is what Durkheim calls as the state of anomie or normless. The background of Durkheim to develop his theory was that of the period of industrialization but it is very much relevant even today.

Durkheim view on suicide is very much relevant even today. Even today out of crisis people have committed suicide i.e., in an anomic situation. Even out of lack of attachment in the families or society, lack of a support group people have committed suicide.

The solution for Durkheim is to fix the norm-system by creating professional communities and solidaristic identities (commonly shared values) in addition to institutions moderating competition (Szelényi, 2009). Durkheim concept of collective consciousness, solidarity is relevant even today. People have shared common goals as a result they continue to function with each other. These shared goals are happiness, prosperity, better standard of living. Those Durkheim work comes out post industrialization even in the 21st century the division of labour concept is relevant. Durkheim view on religion whereby people worship totem and attach meaning to it. It still relevant whereby we symbols, idols, rituals surrounding the totem continuing in different parts of India and world even today.

Check Your Progress:

1. Discuss Collective Effervescence.

2. Explain in few lines the relevance of Durkheim view on religion in the contemporary times.

4.9 CONCLUSION

Durkheim in his study tried to understand that the roots of religion are in the social structure of society. Things are categorized as sacred and profane by the society itself. He analyzed the social source of religion in the analysis of primitive totemism through studying the social structure of the clan. Durkheim summarized that religion and society are almost same, and they are the interpretation of the same process. Sociology of knowledge was also discussed by Durkheim. He tried to conclude that the fundamental mental categories of each person and concepts are society produced representation through religious rituals.

4.10 SUMMARY

The work of Emile Durkheim is relevant even today. Durkheim's two most important works on suicide & Elementary forms of Religious life is discussed in this unit. Durkheim was interested in studying the reason behind the rate of suicide. He mentioned that Integration and Regulation as major factors that cause suicide. He spoke about Altruistic, Egoistic, Anamic and Fatalistic suicide. In his work, ' Elementary forms of Religious life, he spoke about the sacred and profane. The legacy of Durkheim remains relevant even today

4.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Explain Durkheim's theory of suicide.
2. Explain Durkheim's view on Religion.

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5

METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND THEORY OF SOCIAL ACTIONS

Unit Structure

5.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand the methodology used by Weber.
- To comprehend the meaning of Verstehen and ideal types.
- To evaluate the contribution of Weber to understanding rationality and bureaucracy.
- To understand the concepts of disenchantment and iron cage
- To understand the types of social action as explained by Weber

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Max Weber (1864-1920) was not just a sociologist but his interest varied across economics, music, law, philosophy and history. Weber like the sociologists of his time was interested in understanding the nature and causes of social change. Much of his work was also concerned with the development of modern capitalism and the ways in which modern society was different from earlier forms of social organization. Through a series of empirical studies, Weber set forth some of the basic characteristics of modern industrial societies and identified key sociological debates that

remain central for sociologists today. In Weber's view, economic factors are important, but ideas and values have just as much impact on social change.

5.2 BRIEF SKETCH OF MAX WEBER (1864-1920)

Max Weber was born in Erfurt, Germany in 1864 into a middle-class family. The deep differences in the world view of his parents had a profound impact on his intellectual and psychological upbringing. His father was a bureaucrat with an important political position. He was in sharp contrast to his wife, who was a devout Calvinist who lived an ascetic life devoid of the worldly pleasures craved by her husband.

At age 18, Max Weber left home for a short time to attend the University of Heidelberg. Weber studied law, history, philosophy and economics for three semesters at Heidelberg University before spending a year in the military. When he resumed his studies in 1884, he went to the University of Berlin and spent one semester at Göttingen. He earned his Ph.D. in 1889 and became a lawyer and started teaching at the University of Berlin.

There was a tension in Weber's life and, more important, in his work between the bureaucratic mind, as represented by his father, and his mother's religiosity. This unresolved tension permeates Weber's work as it permeated his personal life.

5.3 METHODOLOGY

Weber was exposed to the methodological traditions of Kant, Hegel, Comte, Saint Simon, Durkheim and Marx before his contribution to sociology. The idealist and rational method developed by Kant and Hegel promoted the difference between the statement of value- which explains what it should be and the statement of fact- which indicates what it is. Application of human mind serves the dichotomy between the two. The positivistic method used by Comte advocated that knowledge about the reality can be understood through the empirical or the positivist method. Positivism holds that science should be concerned only with observable entities that are known directly to experience. On the basis of careful observations, one can infer laws that explain the relationship between the observed phenomena. Positivism extends the methodology of natural science to the field of sociology. Weber was convinced with neither the rational or the empirical approach to study the reality but believed that behind every reality there exists causalities of values, forms of actions and sources of motivations.

Weber focused on substantive work stating that "only by laying bare and solving substantial problems can science be established and their methods developed. On the other hand, purely epistemological and

methodological reflections have never played the crucial role in such developments".

Weber's thinking on sociology was shaped on the debates in Germany between the positivists who thought that history was composed of general laws and the subjectivists who reduced history to idiosyncratic actions. The positivists thought that history could be like a natural science; the subjectivists saw the two as radically different.

Weber established the relationship between history and sociology. He explained the difference between the two stating that sociology seeks to formulate type concepts and generalized uniformities of empirical processes, whereas history is oriented to the causal explanation of individuals action, structures and personalities possessing cultural significance. In Weber's view, history is composed of unique empirical events; there can be no generalizations at the empirical level. Sociologists must, therefore, separate the empirical world from the conceptual universe that they construct. The concepts never completely capture the empirical world, but they can be used as heuristic tools for gaining a better understanding of reality. With these concepts, sociologists can develop generalizations, but these generalizations are not history and must not be confused with empirical.

Weber in his study combined the two. His sociology was oriented to the development of clear concepts so that he could perform a causal analysis of historical phenomenon. Weber believed that history is composed of an unlimited collection of specific phenomena. To study these phenomena, it was necessary to develop a variety of concepts designed to be useful for research on the real world. As a general rule, although Weber did not adhere to it strictly and neither do most sociologists and historians, the task of sociology was to develop these concepts, which history was to use in causal analyses of specific historical phenomena. In this way, Weber sought to combine the specific and the general in an effort to develop a science that did justice to the complex nature of social life.

With philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) and Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936), Weber believed that it was difficult to apply natural science methods to accurately predict behaviour. The influence of culture on human behaviour was important as human behaviour cannot be understood without understanding the meaning individuals attribute to their behaviour.

Weber was among the first sociologists to conceptualise sociology as a descriptive and interpretative discipline. Weber defined sociology as "the science concerning itself with the interpretative understanding of and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences". Thus, sociology for Weber should be a science, sociology should be concerned with causality-thereby combining Sociology and history- and sociology

should utilise interpretative understanding or what is called Verstehen.

5.3.1 Verstehen:

Weber and Dilthey introduced the concept of ***Verstehen*** which refers to the use of empathy, or putting oneself in another's place, to understand the motives and logic of another's action. *Verstehen* according to Weber means comprehending or understanding on the level of meaning. This ability to understand social phenomenon is what set social sciences apart from the natural sciences that only observe uniformities and deduce generalizations about the relationship between the atoms or chemical compounds. *Verstehen* makes possible the scientific study of social behaviour in two ways- it facilitates direct observational understanding of the subjective meaning of human actions and it facilitates understanding of the underlying motive.

Sociology requires an understanding of the sense of the attributed meaning or reason that involves the action of agents i.e., individuals who attribute a sense, a reason, a causal factor to what they do.

Weber's thought on *Verstehen* was derived from hermeneutics - a special approach to the understanding and interpretation of published writings to understand the thinking of the author as well as the basic structure of text. Weber sought to use the tools of hermeneutics to understand actors, interactions and human history. *Verstehen* was a rational procedure of study- a tool for macro level analysis- rather than simply intuition, sympathetic participation or empathy.

Weber distinguished two types of *Verstehen*: direct observational understanding and explanatory understanding. Direct observational Verstehen is the obvious subjective meaning of the individual's behaviour and the social scientist attributes meaning to what he observes. It allows us to see actions as what they are. It constitutes the use of outward behaviour and facial expression to understand what is going on. Explanatory understanding would mean when we know the motive behind an individual's action. Here action is placed in a sequence of motivation and why it is occurring. To achieve this one needs to get into the shoes of people doing the activity.

Example- chopping wood is direct observational understanding, chopping wood to earn money or for firewood is explanatory understanding.

A sociologist cannot understand the meaning of an individual's behaviour to that person. But if the behaviour is typical for multiple individuals in a given situation, the sociologist can formulate generalizations that can provide the basis for causal linkages. Since the sociologist is confronted with plurality of causes affecting social or historical events, whether the event would have been different if some specific cause is removed and if yes then there is an objective possibility

that the cause had a decisive effect. Causality for Weber is the probability that an event will be followed or accompanied by another event. Weber's thinking on causality is his belief that because we can have special understanding of social life (Verstehen), the causal knowledge of the social sciences is different from the causal knowledge of the natural sciences.

Rossides (1978) explains that for Weber Verstehen sociology was a search for insights and solutions to the unique and changing problems that humans face rather than just a search for the underlying principle of existence.

5.3.2 Ideal types:

The ideal type grew out of Weber's concepts of *Verstehen* and causal explanation.

When Weber combined his idea of understanding with ideal types, sociology took a step towards scientific sophistication and socio- political utility. As explained by Collins and Makowsky 'social realities under Weber's analysis must be understood (*Verstehen*) by imagining oneself into the experience of men and women as they act out their own worlds, ideal types are the tools for making scientific generalizations out of our understanding of this infinitely complex and shifting world'.

Sociology for Weber must formulate ideal types to make significant contribution to the causal explanation of social and cultural events. Ideal type is an abstract statement of the essential, though often exaggerated, characteristics of any social phenomenon. These 'ideal types' can then be contrasted with actual, empirical forms found in reality

According to Rossides (1978) "An ideal type is an analytical construct that serves the investigator as a measuring rod to ascertain similarities as well as deviations in concrete cases". It is a mental construct. At its most basic level, an ideal type is a concept constructed by the social scientist on the basis of his or her interests and theoretical orientation to capture the essential elements of some social phenomenon. They are heuristic device and are useful and helpful in doing empirical research and in understanding specific aspects of the social world.

In the words of Weber, the function of ideal types is - " its function is the comparison with empirical reality in order to establish its divergences or similarities, to describe them with the most unambiguously intelligible concepts, and to understand and explain them causally."
Weber developed three kinds of ideal types based on their level of abstraction.

a) ideal types of historical particulars which refer to specific historical realities such as western city, Protestant ethic or modern capitalism.
b) ideal types which refer to abstract elements of the historical reality that

are observable in a variety of historical and cultural contexts such as bureaucracy or feudalism.

c) ideal types that constitute rationalizing reconstructions of a particular kind of behaviour such as propositions in economic theory.

In Weber's view the ideal type was to be derived inductively from the real world of social history. To produce ideal type researches first had to immerse themselves in historical reality and then derive the types from that reality. Although ideal types are to be derived from real world, they are not mirror images of the world, they are to be one sided exaggeration of what goes on in the real world. The ideal type must be judged on its typicality and adequacy at the level of meaning. In Weber's view the more exaggerated the ideal type the more useful it is for historical research.

An ideal type is not ideal in the sense of a standard of perfection or an ultimate goal. Ideal types do not embody essences or truth but ideal types are constructed by sociologists and therefore are constructed from particular points of view.

Applied primarily to various types of rational behaviour, ideal type is fundamentally “a model of what an agent would do if he were to act completely rationally according to the criteria of rationality in his behaviours sense.” The ideal types provide the language and procedure for analysing specific behaviour while aiding in the formulation of theoretical explanations for behavioural instances which vary from “ideal typical norms” (Abraham and Morgan 1989)

Check your Progress

1. Explain the concept of Verstehen

5.4 RATIONALIZATION

Rationalisation is the process in modern society characterised by efficiency, predictability, calculability and dehumanisation. Rationalisation has not only transformed the modern society but has played an important role in the development of capitalism. A rational society is one built around rational forms of organisation, technology and efficiency overcoming religion, morality or tradition.

In his work The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism he characterised rational capital as the " most fateful force in our modern life".

It is difficult to point out one definition of rationalization since Weber operated with a number of definitions of the term and often failed to specify the definition he was using in a particular discussion. The rationalization process that Weber described in one social structure or institution was usually quite different from the rationalization of another structure or institution. As Weber put it, the process of rationalization assumes "unusually varied forms" and "the history of rationalism shows a development which by no means follows parallel lines in the various departments of life".

Kalberg (1980) identifies four basic types of rationality in Weber's work.

1. **Practical rationality:** It is defined by Kalberg as "every way of life that views and judges worldly activity in relation to the individual's purely pragmatic and egoistic interests". People who practice practical rationality accept given realities and merely calculate the most expedient ways of dealing with the difficulties that they present. This type of rationality stands in opposition to anything that threatens to transcend everyday routine. They distrust all impractical religious or secular utopian values.

2. Theoretical rationality: Theoretical or Intellectual rationality involves such abstract cognitive processes as logical deduction, induction, attribution of causality, and the like. Unlike practical rationality, theoretical rationality leads the actor to transcend daily realities in a quest to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos.

3. Substantive rationality: (like practical rationality but not theoretical rationality) directly orders action into patterns through clusters of values. Substantive rationality involves a choice of means to ends within the context of a system of values. One value system is no more (substantively) rational than another. To Weber, substantive rationality is the only type with the "potential to introduce methodical ways of life" (Kalberg, 1980). Thus, in the West, a particular substantive rationality with an emphasis on a methodical way of life—Calvinism— subjugated practical rationality and led to the development of formal rationality.

4. Formal rationality: It involves means–ends calculation. formal rationality arose only in the West with the coming of industrialization. The universally applied rules, laws, and regulations that characterize formal rationality in the West are found particularly in the economic, legal, and scientific institutions, as well as in the bureaucratic form of domination.

Ritzer highlights six basic characteristics of formal rationality:

(1) **Calculability:** things that can be counted or quantified.

(2) **Efficiency:** finding the best means to a given end.

(3) **Predictability:** things operate in the same way from one time or place to another.

(4) **Replacing human technology with nonhuman technology:** Nonhuman technologies (such as computerized systems) are viewed as

more calculable, more efficient, and more predictable than human technologies.

(5) **Gain control over an array of uncertainties:** gain control especially on the uncertainties posed by human beings who work in, or are served by, them.

(6) **Irrational consequences:** Rational systems tend to have a series of irrational consequences for the people involved with them and for the systems themselves, as well as for the larger society.

The conflict between substantive rationality and formal rationality have played "a particularly fateful role in the unfolding of rationalization processes in the West." (Kalberg 1980).

Weber used rationalisation most powerfully and meaningfully in his understanding of the modern western world especially in the capitalist economy, as an iron cage of formally rational structures. Weber described capitalism and bureaucracies as "two great rationalizing forces". In fact, Weber saw capitalism and bureaucracies as being derived from the same basic sources (especially inner worldly asceticism), involving similarly rational and methodical action, and reinforcing one another and in the process furthering the rationalization of the Occident. In Weber's view, the only real rival to the bureaucrat in technical expertise and factual knowledge was the capitalist.

The works of Max Weber focused on the problems of the western civilization- with the rationalization and demystification of aspects of modern life. There was a growing disenchantment of the world with the radical transformations in social life. By rationalization Weber meant the process of making life more efficient and predictable by wringing out individuality and spontaneity in life. For Weber growing rationalization results in what he referred to as the iron cage, in which the individual is trapped by the systems of efficiency that were designed to enhance the well-being of humanity.

Check your Progress

2. What is Rationalization?

5.5 BUREAUCRACY

Weber's focus on rationalisation led him to the study of operations and expansion of large-scale organisations in public and private sectors of modern societies. Bureaucracy can be considered to be a particular case of rationalization, or rationalization applied to human organization.

Bureaucratic coordination of human action, Weber believed, is the distinctive mark of modern social structures.

Weber's sociological interest in the structures of authority was motivated by his political interests. His analysis of authority structures was consistent with his assumptions about the nature of action. Weber was mainly interested in legitimate forms of domination which he called authority. The three bases on which authority is made legitimate to followers is the rational, traditional and charismatic. What interested Weber was bureaucracy which Weber considered as the purest form of rational legal authority. Bureaucracy was defined in its ideal type by these characteristics:

1. Official business is conducted on a continuous basis.
2. Business is conducted in accordance with stipulated rules
3. Every official's responsibility and authority are part of a hierarchy of authority.
4. Officials do not own the resources necessary for them to perform their assigned functions, but are accountable for the use of those resources.
5. Offices cannot be appropriated by their incumbents; it always remains part of the organization.
6. Official business is conducted on the basis of written documents.

Bureaucracy in Weber's analysis fits the spirit of rational capitalism. A capitalist market economy demanded that the official business of administration should be precisely discharged without ambiguity and should be continuous and discharged with the maximum speed.

He pointed out that bureaucracy promotes a rationalist way of life. He described bureaucracies as "escape proof" and the hardest to destroy once they were established. The ideal typical bureaucracy is an exaggeration of the rational characteristics of bureaucracies. He distinguished ideal typical bureaucracy from ideal typical bureaucrat. He conceived of bureaucracies as structures and of bureaucrats as positions within those structures.

Among the most important factors contributing to the development of modern bureaucracy are:

1. The development of money economy that guaranteed a constant income for maintaining bureaucracy through a stable system of taxation.
2. The quantitative development of administrative tasks.
3. Qualitative changes of administrative tasks.
4. The superiority of bureaucracy over any other form of organization.
5. The complicated and specialized nature of modern culture that demands the personally detached and strictly objective expert

6. The rational interpretation of law.
7. The concentration of material means of management in the hands of the industrialists and the public organizations as the state or army.
8. The levelling of economic and social differences and the rise of modern mass representative democracy.

Increasing bureaucratisation and rationalization of the modern western economies was inevitable and inescapable. Bureaucratisation would ultimately lead to de-personalisation of human relations in government and industry.

5.6 DISENCHANTMENT

For Weber, there was a strong pessimistic streak: he saw the world as an Iron Cage, with growing rationality creating an ever spreading 'disenchantment with the world'

Weber like Karl Marx recognised the efficiency of industrial capitalism. Like Marx he also believed that modern society leads to alienation- for Weber the regulation and dehumanisation that comes with expanding bureaucracy leads to alienation an increasing 'disenchantment with the world', for Marx it was economic inequality leading to alienation. Bureaucracies, Weber warned, treat people as a series of cases rather than as unique individuals. Specialisation and tedious routines regulated the individuals. Weber envisaged modern society as a vast and growing system of rules seeking to regulate everything and threatening to crush the human spirit. Like Marx rather than serving humanity modern society enslaves them. Weber portrayed the modern individual as 'only a small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism that prescribes to him an endlessly fixed routine of march'. He feared that the rationalisation of society would end up reducing people to robots.

Weber used the German word *Entzauberung*, translated into English as "disenchantment". It literally means "de-magic-ation." For Weber, the advent of scientific methods and reasoning meant that the world was demystified- the role of religion, magic, mystery, superstitions and faith became less prominent, and replaced by more rational motives for acting. Tradition and forms of magical thinking is replaced with calculation, everything is explained in scientific and rational terms.

But, for Weber, the effect of that demystification was that the world became disenchanted and disenchanting, predictable and intellectualized. The disenchantment of the world is the alienating and undesirable negative consequence of scientific progress. People started to think more about how they should act, what they should do, and the best way to achieve their goals.

Check your Progress

1. What Is Bureaucracy?

2. Explain the concept of Disenchantment

5.7 IRON CAGE

The concept of Iron cage as proposed by Weber suggests that the technological and economic relationships that organized and grew out of capitalist production became themselves fundamental forces in society. Individuals are trapped in organisations based on the principles of efficiency, rationality and control. Modern organisations are characterised by rules and regulations which govern the behaviour of the people working in it to the extent where work process becomes so rational that there is no enjoyment and fulfilment leading to alienation.

Weber while explaining iron cage said that "modernisation creates hedonists without heart and specialists without spirit".

5.8 SOCIAL ACTION

Weber's sociology was based on ideas of social action. Weber's discussion of social action is an example of the use of an ideal type. The combined qualities of action and meaning were important for scientific analysis of society. Weber differentiated between action and reactive behaviour. He was concerned with action that involved the intervention of thought processes between the occurrence of a stimulus and the ultimate response. Action occurred when individuals attached subjective meaning to their actions. Weber explains that "Action is social in so far as, by the virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual, it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course."

In his action theory the focus was on the individual and not the collectivity. He was interested in the actually assigned reasons for identifiable behaviour given by the actors themselves. In the absence of assigned meaning by the individual the actions are meaningless.

He utilises his ideal type methodology to clarify the meaning of action by

identifying four basic types of action.

1. *Rational action in relation to the goal*: here the actor determines the goal and chooses his means in terms of the efficiency to achieve the goal. e.g., Achieving higher education in a good university to obtain a good job.
2. *Rational action in relation to a value*: here means are chosen for their efficiency but ends are determined by values. e.g., the captain of a ship going down with it.
3. *Affective or emotional action*: here emotions determines the ends and means of the action. The action is determined by the emotional state of the actor. e.g., A mother slapping the baby.
4. *Traditional action*: here ends and means are determined by customs and rituals. e.g.: Following a particular practice because that is the ritual.

Although Weber identified four ideal types of action, he was well aware that in practice any given action involves some combination of all four types of action. Weber argued that sociologist have a much better chance of understanding action of the more rational variety than they do action dominated by affect or tradition.

The typology given by Weber was to understand how modern western societies differed from the past. The modern western society is dominated by goal-oriented rationality touching every aspect of modern social life including politics, economics, law, interpersonal relationships and has resulted from the sustained application of a means- to- ends utility in human behaviour.

5.9 SUMMARY

Weber's work ranged over many areas: music, religion, love, law, the economy, politics. He looked at a wide range of civilisations. He also engaged with politics (and his wife, Marianne, was a leading feminist of her time). He struggled with the balance between his personal political commitments and his view of sociology as being scientifically neutral – or value free. With a broad understanding of law, economics, religion and history, Max Weber (1864–1920) produced what many regard as the greatest individual contribution to sociology. He generated ideas that were very wide ranging. Much of his work was also concerned with the development of modern capitalism and the ways in which modern society was different from earlier forms of social organization. Through a series of empirical studies, Weber set forth some of the basic characteristics of modern industrial societies and identified key sociological debates that remain central for sociologists today.

For Weber the basic structure is social action and the role of sociologist is to understand the meanings associated with action rather than mechanically studying action and its consequence using the methods of natural science. He introduced the concept of verstehen. The concept of

ideal types can help sociologists to make comparisons on the basis on which generalisations can be made.

5.10 GLOSSARY

- Verstehen
- Ideal types
- Disenchantment
- Bureaucracy
- Rationalisation
- Social action
- Iron cage

5.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Analyse Weber's contribution to social action.
2. What is an ideal type? Explain the idea of the ideal type in Weber's theory of bureaucracy.
3. Discuss the characteristics of modern bureaucracy as explained by Weber.
4. What does Weber mean by describing the modern world as an iron cage? Is there any way out?
5. Explain Weber's view on rationalisation.
6. Explain the concept of Disenchantment.
7. Discuss the methodology of Weber.

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6

DIALOGUE WITH MARX AND THE LEGACY OF WEBER TODAY

Unit Structure

6.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand Weber's perspective on religion.
- To understand Weber's analysis of the relationship between the ethics of acetic Protestantism and the rise of capitalism.
- To understand Weber's view on world religions.
- To understand the legacy and relevance of Weber in today's context**.**

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Max Weber (1864-1920) was the eldest of the children of Max Weber Sr. and Helene Weber. Weber's parents represented diverse personality and worldview. Weber's mother was very religious whereas his authoritarian father was without the religious outlook and desired the bourgeoisie standard of living. The religious and the emotional differences between the parents had a profound impact on Max Weber who experienced an ideological and psychological tension. Weber was also troubled with the political turmoil in Germany at that time. From early in Weber's life the impact of the intersection of religious beliefs and political and economic interest within his family was evident. A source of personal tension and a marked strain throughout his life, Weber turned his critical skills to an investigation of their fundamental relationship with meticulousness and creative genius- that led to his classical study of the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

6.2 RELIGION AND THE RISE OF CAPITALISM

Both Marx and Weber are known for their analysis of capitalism and its relation with religion. Marx was an economic determinist wherein all social, cultural, political and technological aspects of the society are determined by economic forces. In his classical study the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber demonstrated that economic factors are not the only factors in bringing progress and transformation, but other forces like religious institutions are equally important in shaping individual action and development of the society. Weber believed religion could be understood as something separate from society unlike Marx who considered religion inseparable from the economy and the worker. Marx considered religion as the false consciousness of man- the "opium of the masses" -helping proletariats temporarily cope with the exploitation and miseries caused by capitalism. Religion according to Weber was not an ideology produced by economic interests rather it was what made modern capitalist world a reality. It would be incorrect to assume that Weber replaced one sided economic determinism of Marx with ideological determinism. He considered social, economic, and political factors as well but the confluence of religious values played a central role.

Marx and Weber both agree that the desire to accumulate wealth and rationality due to technological advancements led to the rise of capitalism. However, Marx saw rise of capitalism as predicted by history whereas Weber believed that it was due to the Protestant Ethic with its emphasis on hard work and accumulation of wealth. Marx looked at capitalism in terms of its alienating impact on individuals and Weber in terms of rationalization. Rationalization for Weber produced a disenchantment of the world.

Weber's thought on rationalization was illustrated in his work on religion and capitalism. In the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber explained how rationalism of western culture tied to economic and technical conditions of machine production was originally motivated by religious values. In the course of time religious values lost their significance and the technical and economic aspects became an irresistible force determining everyone's life and enclosing them like an "iron cage".

Weber was interested in the relation between religion and the development of the capitalism found in the west. He was primarily interested in the system of the ideas of the world's religion, in the spirit of capitalism and in the rationalization as a modern system of norms and values. His work on religion and capitalism involved an enormous body of cross-cultural historical research. At one level it was a study of relationship between religious ideas and the spirit of capitalism and at the other level it is a study of how the west developed a rational religious system of Calvinism that led to the development of capitalism.

6.3 PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM

In his classical work Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism Weber sought to demonstrate that only economic factors do not have a determining influence, which he believed was Marx's major weakness and failure.

In Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber traced the impact of Protestantism primarily Calvinism on the rise of the spirit of capitalism.

The relationship between religious values and economic interests was triggered by a number of factors. Weber noticed that Protestants, particularly Protestants of particular sects were the chief captains of industry and possessed more wealth and economic means than other religious groups, namely the Catholics. Therefore, he wanted to ascertain whether there is an essential harmony between the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. He also sought to find out to what extent the religious values in India, China and the Middle East facilitated or hindered the development of capitalism. To define Protestant Ethic and capitalism Weber made use of the concept of ideal type. Protestant Ethic referred to a set of values and beliefs that make up the religious ideal. Capitalism in its ideal type is that complex activity designed to maximize profit through the careful exercise of rational organisation and management of production.

Weber rejected the explanation that capitalism arose in the west in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries due to the material conditions at that time and also the psychological explanation that the development of capitalism was due to acquisitive instinct. His view was that religious ideas produced by the religious revolutions in the sixteenth century was the major explanatory variable.

Weber identified a number of values in Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, that led to growth of capitalism (Abraham and Morgan 1989)

1. **The shift from ritualistic and other worldly orientation to down to earth pragmatism.**

Human society should seek to understand natural order rather than indulging in mysticism. This was essentially an anti-ritualistic attitude that favours the development of science and rational investigation.

2. **Changed attitude towards work:** Work is worship. Protestant Ethic looks at work as a virtue contributing to the glory of God. Pursuit of economic interest was not merely self-interest but an ethical duty.
3. **The concept of calling:** Calvinism entailed the idea of predestination; people were predestined to be either among the saved or the damned and nothing can change his ultimate fate. They believed that there are

signs by which God indicates to every individual whether they are among the saved. People were urged to work hard, to be diligent so that they could uncover the signs of salvation which was to be found in economic success. The Calvinist were urged to seek gainful enterprises, accumulate wealth and become a man of vocation and prove their destiny.

4. **New attitude towards collection of interest on loans:**

   Calvinism prescribed collection of interests on loans which was prohibited in Catholicism. This led to increase in economic activity, establishment of lending houses, new investments and new floating capital.

5. **Strictures on alcoholic beverages consumption, rejection of holidays:** this encouraged working throughout the year for maximum utilisation of capital and other investments leading to greater productivity – and encouragement of literacy and learning.

6. **Protestant asceticism:** Protestant Ethic incorporates the idea that one should abstain from earthly pleasures. On one hand it urged people to accumulate wealth and on the other hand prohibits the use of wealth for enjoyment. Thus, there is ceaseless pursuit of profit, not for enjoyment but simply for the satisfaction of producing more and more.

Weber was well aware that social and economic conditions have a reciprocal impact on religion. Though he did not deal with such relationships he made it clear that his goal was not to substitute a one sided spiritualistic and ideological interpretation for the one-sided materialistic explanation attributed to Marxists.

To explain why capitalism did not arise in other societies Weber dealt with the spiritual and material barriers to the rise of capitalism. Weber found a variety of non-religious social and economic conditions conducive to the development of capitalism in China and India but the ethical system of Confucianism and the idea of karma in Hinduism were not favourable.

6.3.1 Religion and capitalism in China:

China had the material prerequisites for the development of capitalism. In China there was a tradition of acquisitiveness and unscrupulous competition, there was industry, enormous capacity for work, powerful guilds, population was expanding and there was growth in precious metals. With all these material conditions also, capitalism did not arise in China as it did in the west. Not that there was no capitalism in China, one found the moneylenders who sought high rates of profit- but the market as well as other components of the rational capitalistic system were absent. In Weber's view the social, structural and religious barriers in china prevented the development of capitalism.

Among the structural factors were:

1. **The structure of the typical Chinese community:** The Chinese community was held together by rigid kinship bonds in the form of sibs. The sibs were ruled by the elders and were self-contained entities who dealt little with other sibs. This encouraged small, encapsulated land holdings and household based rather than market economy. Partitioning of land prevented technological developments, agricultural production remained with the peasants and industrial production with the small-scale artisans. Because of the allegiance to the sibs, it was difficult for modern cities- which were the centres of western capital- to develop. The central government was not able to govern these units effectively.
2. **The structure of the Chinese state:** The patrimonial state governed by tradition was a structural barrier to the development of capitalism. A rational and calculable system of administration and law enforcement was largely absent. With few formal laws covering commerce, absence of central court and rejection of legal formalism was a barrier to the rise of capitalism. The general administrative structure, officials of bureaucratic administration with vested material interests acted against the development of capitalism.
3. **Nature of Chinese language:** In Weber's view the nature of Chinese language militated against rationality by making systematic thought difficult. Intellectual thought was in the form of parables that made it difficult for the development of cumulative body of knowledge.
4. **The two dominant systems of religious ideas in China:** Confucianism and Taoism- militated against the development of the spirit of capitalism. In Confucianism literary knowledge was more important than technical knowledge for the higher position. It encouraged "a highly bookish literary education."

The literary intellectuals were unconcerned with economic activities and the state of the economy. The Confucianism world view grew to be the policy of the state. The Chinese state played minimal role in rationally influencing the economy and the society. Only the Confucians could serve as officials and all other competitors like the bourgeoisie, prophets and priests were blocked from serving in the government.

Rather than working for salvation like the Calvinist, Confucian accepted things as they were. Confucians rejected thrift, active engagement in profitable enterprise was morally dubious with the focus only on good position and not high profits. All this prevented the rise of capitalism. Weber perceived Taoism as mystical Chinese religion in which supreme good was deemed to be a psychic state, a state of mind and not a

state of grace to be obtained by conduct in the real world. Taoism was traditional and did not provide motivation for innovative action in this world. With no motivation to change the world or to build a capitalist system Confucianism and Taoism did not favour the rise of capitalism.

6.3.2 Religion and capitalism in India:

The structural barriers of caste with its restrictions on social mobility and regulation of minute aspects of people's lives prevented the development of capitalism in India. The upper castes especially the Brahmins were like the Confucians, with the idea that certain works were beneath them. With emphasis on literary knowledge, observance of elegance in manners and proprieties in conduct, indifference to the everyday affairs of the world were barriers to development of capitalism. The Hindu religion with its emphasis on reincarnation, achievement of salvation by following faithfully the rules, the world as being transient failed to produce people who could create a capitalist economic system and a rationally ordered society.

6.4 LEGACY OF WEBER

Weber's writing helped form the basis of modern sociology. His influence runs throughout the realms of sociology, politics, religion and economics. Weber's work represents a fusion of historical research and sociological theorising. His study on concrete situations and historical processes, his analysis of the structure of social action, comparative study of religions, his writings on rationality and bureaucracy in the modern society are important contributions to sociology. Weber made extensive use of his knowledge of history, philosophy, religion and social structures to refine his concepts and to develop general theoretical schema dealing with a variety of social phenomena.

Weber's most important legacy is the challenge that his work presents to the Marxist worldview. The Weberian challenge to Marxism involves whether or not there is some meaning to history.

Weber's sociology has been used and adapted by phenomenologists Alfred Schutz who took Weber's conception of interpretive theory as the starting point for his work. Schutz agreed the study of *Verstehen* was important for sociological explanation. Critical theorist used Weber's analysis of rationalization and rational legal domination as the starting point of their analysis of modes of class oppression in advanced capitalist society. Talcott Parsons who played a major role in introducing Weberian sociology into US, made Weber's social action theory a foundation for his "voluntaristic" theory of action. The theories of social stratification are based on Weberian rather than Marxist model of stratification. Weber's comparative sociology of religion is still considered an important contribution.

Weber's ideas on rationality, authority and bureaucracy are relevant today in the study of organisations and organisational research. Weber's discussion of organisation was written in the early part of the twentieth century. North American sociologist George Ritzer suggested the 'bureaucratisation of society' has proceeded further and deeper. He took the case of McDonald's restaurants as his illustration, but drew much wider implications.

Weber's comparative sociology of religion is still viewed by many as the most important contribution to sociology. Weber's idea of bureaucracy imprisoning humanity in "iron cage" resonates in modern society in what Castells calls the new global economy the 'automaton' — he thinks that we no longer fully control the world we have created. As Castells puts it: 'Humankind's nightmare of seeing our machines taking control of our world seems on the edge of becoming reality - not in the form of robots that eliminate jobs or government computers that police our lives, but as an electronically based system of financial transactions'.

6.5 SUMMARY

In Weber's work The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber traced the impact of Protestantism, more specifically Calvinism on the rise of the spirit of capitalism. Weber believed that the Protestant Ethic was one of the important causes for the rise of capitalism. Weber found a variety of non-religious social and economic conditions conducive to the development of capitalism in China and India but the ethical system of Confucianism and the idea of karma in Hinduism were not favourable. Weber's ideas on rationality, authority, bureaucracy and religion are important contributions to sociology which are relevant in understanding modern societies.

6.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the role of Protestant Ethics in the development of capitalism.
2. Examine the difference between Marx and Weber in understanding religion and capitalism.
3. Explain how the ethical beliefs in Protestantism were critical to the rise of western capitalism.
4. Discuss the relevance of Weber to understanding the modern society.

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7

THE THREE LEVELS OF SOCIAL REALITY, INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Unit Structure

7.0 OBJECTIVES

- To comprehend the contribution of George Simmel in context of Western Modernity
- To examine the Levels and Areas of concerns depicted by him
- To evaluate the significance of his idea of Individual Consciousness

7.1 INTRODUCTION

George Simmel was one of the first generation of German sociologists. Though George Simmel is not regarded as being as influential in sociology as were Marx, Weber, Durkheim, or even Parsons. These sociologist despite their significance had little influence on American theory in early 20th century. Several of the early United States sociologists were influenced by Simmel. He is better known to be the early American sociologist. In recent years the increasing influence of Simmel on sociological theory is quite vivid.

7.2 BACKGROUND

Georg Simmel (1858-1918, Germany) was born in Berlin on March 1, 1858 and received his doctorate in 1881 based on a study

of Immanuel Kant's theories of philosophy. Following his degree, Simmel taught philosophy, psychology, and early sociology courses at his alma mater. He was of Jewish ancestry and was marginalized within the German academic system. Only in 1914 did Simmel obtain a regular academic appointment, and this appointment was in Strasbourg, far from Berlin. In spite of these problems, he wrote extensively on the nature of association, culture, social structure, the city, and the economy. His writings were read by Durkheim and Weber, and Simmel contributed greatly to sociology and European intellectual life in the early part of this century. One of his most famous writings is "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) and his best known book is *The Philosophy of Money* (1907). Simmel's ideas were very influential on the Marxist scholar Georg Lukacs (1885-1971) and Simmel's writings on the city and on money are now being used by contemporary sociologists.

7.3 GEORGE SIMMEL IN THE CONTEXT OF WESTERN MODERNITY

Simmel combines ideas from all of the three major classical writers and was influenced by Hegel and Kant. When Simmel discusses social structures, the city, money, and modern society, his analysis has some similarities to the analyses of Durkheim (problem of individual and society), Weber (effects of rationalization), and Marx (alienation). Simmel considered society to be an association of free individuals, and said that it could not be studied in the same way as the physical world, i.e. sociology is more than the discovery of natural laws that govern human interaction. "For Simmel, society is made up of the interactions between and among individuals, and the sociologist should study the patterns and forms of these associations, rather than quest after social laws." (Farganis, p. 133). This emphasis on social interaction at the individual and small group level, and viewing the study of these interactions as the primary task of sociology makes Simmel's approach different from that of the classical writers, especially Marx and Durkheim.

It is Simmel's attempt to integrate analysis of individual action with the structural approach that makes his writings of contemporary interest.

Simmel began his inquiries from the bottom up, observing the smallest of social interactions and attempting to see how larger-scale institutions emerged from them. In doing so, he often noticed phenomena that other theorists missed. For example, Simmel observed that the number of parties to an interaction can affect its nature. The interaction between two people, a *dyad*, will be very different from that which is possible in a three-party relationship, or *triad*. (Farganis, p. 133)

Simmel is best known as a microbiologist who plays a significant role in the development of small-group research, symbolic interactionism and exchange theory. All of Simmel’s contributions in these areas reflect

his belief that sociologists should study primarily form and types of social interaction.

7.4 LEVELS AND AREAS OF CONCERN

Simmel is best regarded for his much more complicated and sophisticated theory of social reality. As cited in Ritzer and Goodman (2004) Tom Bottomore and David Frisby argue that there are four basic levels of social concern in Simmel's work.

1. Microscopic assumptions about the psychological concerns of social life.
2. His interest in sociological components of interpersonal relationships on a larger scale.
3. At macroscopic level, his work on the structure of and change in the social and cultural "spirit" of his time.

Simmel not only with this three tiered image of social reality but also adopted the principal of *emergence* which advocates that the higher levels emerge out of the lower levels. According to Simmel, If society is to be an autonomous object of an independent science, than it can only be through the fact that, out of the sum sum of the individual elements that constitute it, a new entity emerges; otherwisw all problems of social science would only be those of individual psychology" (Frisby, 1984).Overarching these three tiers is that fourth which involves ultimate metaphysical principal of life.

All the above truths affected Simmel's work and played a significant role in shaping his image of the future directions of the world.

All the above concerns with several levels of social reality is reproduced through Simmel's definition of three distinguishable problem "areas" in sociology in "The Problem Areas of Sociology" (1950).

1. He described first as "pure" sociology. In this psychological variables are combined with forms of interactions. Although Simmel clearly assumed that actors have creative mental abilities, he gave slight overt attention to his aspect of social reality. His most minuscule work is with the form that interaction takes place with the types of people who engage in interaction. These forms include subordination, super ordination, exchange, conflict and sociability. In his types of work he differentiated between position in the interaction structure, such as "competitor" and "coquette," and orientation to the world, such as "miser," "spendthrift," "stranger," and "adventurer."

2. At the intermediate level is Simmel's "general" sociology, dealing with social and cultural products of human history of societies and cultural.

3. Finally, in Simmel's "philosophical" sociology, he deals with his views on basic nature, and inevitable fate of humankind.

Check Your Progress

1. Explain the concept of Dyad and Triad

7.5 DIALECTICAL THINKING

Simmel's way of dealing with the interrelationships among three basic levels of social reality gave a dialectical character to his sociology. This approach was multi-casual and multidirectional, integrates fact and values, and rejects the idea that there are hard and fast rules and dividing lines between the phenomena. Simmel's sociology was always concerned with the relationships, especially interactions. He was a "methodological relationist" who operated with the principle that everything interacts in some way or the other with everything else.

7.6 FASHION

An example of how Simmel examines some of these connections in a concrete connection is his discussion of fashion. (See Ritzer p. 161 and Ashley and Orenstein, pp. 314-5). Simmel views fashion as developing in the city, "because it intensifies a multiplicity of social relations, increases the rate of social mobility and permits individuals from lower strata to become conscious of the styles and fashions of upper classes." (Ashley and Orenstein, p. 314). In the traditional and small circle setting, fashion would have no meaning or be unnecessary. Since modern individuals tend to be detached from traditional anchors of social support, fashion allows the individual to signal or express their own personality or personal values. Simmel noted that fashion provides the best arena for people who lack autonomy and who need support, yet whose self-awareness nevertheless requires that they be recognized as distinct and as particular kinds of beings. (in Ashley and Orenstein, p. 314).

Ritzer notes that fashion can be considered to be a part of objective culture in that it allows the individual to come into conformity with norms of a group. At the same time, it can express individuality, because an individual may choose to express some difference from norms. Fashion is dynamic and has an historical dimension to it, with acceptance of a fashion being followed by some deviation from this fashion, change in the fashion, and perhaps ultimate abandonment of the original norm, and a new norm becoming established. There is a dialectical process involved in the success of the fashion involved in its initial and then widespread acceptance also leads to its eventual abandonment and failure. Leadership in a fashion means that the leader actually follows the fashion better than others, as well as there being followers of the fashion. Mavericks are those who reject the fashion, and this may become an inverse form of imitation.

In summary, fashion allows personal values to be expressed at the same time as norms are followed. The two exist together, and the one without the other would be meaningless. In all of this, social interaction is of the essence - what others think, what one thinks that others think, how one conceives of fashion, etc.

Check Your Progress

1.Explain the fashion from Simmel point of view.

7.7 INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Simmel clearly operated with the sense that human beings possess creative consciousness.This interest in creativity is manifest in Simmel's discussion of the diverse forms of interaction.

For Simmel, there is a dynamic or dialectical tension between the individual and society -- individuals are free and creative spirits, yet are part of the socialization process. Simmel was troubled by this relationship, viewing modern society as freeing the individual from historical and traditional bonds and creating much greater individual freedom, but with individuals also experiencing a great sense of alienation within the culture of urban life. Simmel notes:

The deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of external culture, and of the technique of life. (Farganis, p. 136).

Simmel makes three assumptions about the individual and society. (Ashley and Orenstein, p. 312). These are:

1. Individuals are both within and outside society.
2. Individuals are both objects and subjects within networks of communicative interaction.
3. Individuals have the impulse to be self-fulfilling and self-completing, that is, they seek an integrated self-concept. Society also tries to integrate itself (like Durkheim noted), although the effect of this may be in opposition to individual integrity.

In the social world, the various forms and styles of interaction are brought into existence by people and the above assumptions are realized as individuals interact with one another. Ritzer notes that humans possess creative consciousness and the basis of social life is "conscious individuals or groups of individuals who interact with one another for a variety of motives, purposes, and interests." (p. 163) People are conscious

and creative individuals and the mind plays a crucial role in this mutual orientation and social interaction. This creativity allows for flexibility and freedom on the part of the individual, but at the same time it helps to create the structures of objective culture that may constrain and stifle this freedom. That is, social interaction becomes regularized and has patterns to it, and these become forms of association. These patterns and forms, regardless of their content, is what sociologists should study.

This means that society is not a separate reality of its own, but "society merely is the name for a number of individuals, connected by interaction ... society certainly is not a 'substance,' nothing concrete, but an *event*: it is the function of receiving and affecting the fate and development of one individual by the other." For Simmel, society is nothing but *lived experience*, and social forces are not external to, nor necessarily constraining for the individual, rather it is individuals who reproduce society every living moment through their actions and interactions. Ritzer notes that Simmel disagreed with Durkheim that "society is a real, material entity" and did not view society as merely a collection of individuals. Rather, he adopted the position of "society as a set of interactions." (p. 170).

The individual in a social unit must be an entity or constituent part of the unit, and Simmel distinguishes between a personal self and a social self. If there is no self-consciousness, symbolic interaction would disappear and human experience would just be the responses to stimuli. Instead, we live and die in terms of what is inter subjectively meaningful -- i.e. view ourselves in terms of responses of others - and even on others who we have never met.

Ashley and Orenstein (p. 316) provide an example using sex and gender differences. Within a patriarchal or unequal male/female relationship, relations may appear to be intimate and spontaneous. In fact, if the situation is one of dominant and subordinate, the nature of the relationship is structured by the expectations of both the dominant and the subordinate. Objective form of dominance and submission contain the way in which what is thought of as subjective can be expressed. This dominant and subordinate relationship is also maintained by the subjective impulses that are part of the interaction.

All of Simmel's discussion of the forms of interaction imply that actors must be consciously oriented to one another. Thus interaction in stratified system requires that superordinates and subordinates orient themselves to each other. The interaction would cease and stratification system may collapse if mutual orientation is missing.

Simmel stated that society is not "out there" but is also "my representation' something dependent on the activity of the consciousness." He also had a sense of individual conscience and of the fact that the norms and values of the society become internalized in individual consciousness.

Though we can see manifestation of Simmel's concern with consciousness in various places in his work, he did very little more than assume its existence.

7.8 SUMMARY

George Simmel was one of the first generation of German sociologists. Though George Simmel is not regarded as being as influential in sociology as were Marx, Weber, Durkheim, or even Parsons. These sociologist despite their significance had little influence on American theory in early 20th century. Several of the early United States sociologists were influenced by Simmel. He is better known to be the early American sociologist. In recent years the increasing influence of

Simmel on sociological theory is quite vivid. Over the course of the next 15 years, Simmel lectured and worked as a public sociologist, authoring numerous articles on his topics of study for newspapers and magazines. His writing became popular, making him well-known and respected across Europe and in the United States.

Ironically, Simmel's groundbreaking body of work was shunned by conservative members of the academy, who refused to recognize his achievements with formal academic appointments. Exacerbating Simmel's frustrations were the chilling effects of the rising anti-Semitism he faced as a Jew.

Refusing to knuckle under, Simmel, redoubled his commitment to advancing sociological thinking and his burgeoning discipline. In 1909, along with Ferdinand Tonnies and Max Weber, he co-founded the German Society for Sociology.

Levels of Concern:

There are four basic levels of concern in Simmel's work. First are his assumptions about the psychological workings of social life. Second is his interest in sociological workings of interpersonal relationships. Third is his work on the structure of changes in the social and cultural "spirit" of his times. He also adopted the principle of emergence, which is the idea that higher levels emerge out of lower levels. Finally, he dealt with his views in the nature and inevitable fate of humanity. His most microscopic work dealt with forms and interactions that takes with different types of people. The forms include subordination, super-ordination, exchange, conflict and sociability.

Dialectical Thinking:

A dialectical approach is multicasual multidirectional, integrates facts and value, rejects the idea that there are hard and fast dividing lines between social phenomena, focuses on social relations, looks not only at the present but also at the past and future, and is deeply concerned with both conflicts and contradictions. Simmel's sociology was concerned with

relationships especially interaction and was known as a "methodological relationist". His principle was that everything interacts in some way with everything else. Overall he was mostly interested in dualisms, conflicts, and contradictions in whatever realm of the social world he happened to be working on.

Individual Consciousness:

Simmel focused on forms of association and paid little attention to individual consciousness. Simmel believed in the Georg Simmel creative consciousness and this belief can be found in diverse forms of interaction, the ability of actors to create social structures and the disastrous effects those structures had on the creativity of individuals. Simmel also believed that social and cultural structures come to have a life of their own.

7.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Explain the concept of Fashion and Individual consciousness
2. Give a brief account of Simmel's areas of concerns.

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8

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MONEY AND THE LEGACY OF SIMMEL TODAY

Unit Structure

8.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand the "Philosophy of Money" as propagated by George Simmel.
- To assess the relationship of his theory in contemporary context.
- To evaluate the impact of Simmel's contribution through his legacy.

8.1 THE PHILOSOPHY OF MONEY

8.1.1. Introduction:

People think about money as coins and banknotes that enable you to buy goods and pay services. However, from the sociological perspective, money is much more. For example, an anthropologists Mary Douglas, defines money as: extreme and specialized type of ritual. While the philosopher Schopenhauer, says that money is human happiness in the abstract. The economist Adam Smith, saw money as the work, while Leo

Tostoy called them "new form of slavery and terrible." The Holy Catholic, will say that the love of money is the "root of all evil." The economist John Keynes, said that the accumulation of money for self-interest is pathological disease. Marx argued that the use of money in the right way has the capacity to be "a radical level" of inequality, but also as a "foreign entity" that dominates, to which people are subjected. He believed that the system of money made people needed. However, Georg Simmel see money as "freedom." In his Philosophy of Money, he explores the social meaning of money and treats money as a symbol. He looks at some of the effects of money and their symbolism for people and society in general. According to Simmel in every society, money is made on personal or objective measurment of the value. The transition from the economy of exchange to the economy of money, marks a shift in public relations and social interactions. The use of money in society, enables the personal relationship between strangers on issues of substantial value or importance in those days.

8.1.2. Philosophy of Money:

Simmel's major work concerns money and the social meaning of money. In this book *'The Philosophy of Money'* (1907/1978) Simmel is concerned with large social issues, and this book can be thought of as on a par with *The Division of Labour* of Durkheim, although not as extensive and thorough as Marx's *Capital* or Weber's *Economy and Society*.

In *The Philosophy of Money*, Georg Simmel puts money on the couch. He provides us with a classic analysis of the social, psychological and philosophical aspects of the money economy, full of brilliant insights into the forms that social relationships take. He analyzes the relationships of money to exchange, human personality, the position of women, and individual freedom. Simmel also offers us prophetic insights into the consequences of the modern money economy and the division of labour, in particular the processes of alienation and reification in work and urban life.

Though it is clear from the title that that Simmel's focus is on money, his interest is embedded in a set of broader theoretical and philosophical concern.

1. Simmel was interested in in the broad issue of value and money can be seen as a specific form of value.
2. At another level he was not interested in the money but its impact on wide range of phenomena as the "inner world" of actors and objective culture as a whole.
3. He treated money as a specific phenomenon linked with a variety of components of life, including "exchange, ownership, greed, extravaganve, cynicism. Individual freedom, the style of life, culture, the value of personality etc.

4. Finally he saw money as specific component of life capable of helping us understand the totality of life.

He saw economic problem of his time as simply a specific manifestation of a more general cultural problem, the alienation of objective from subjective culture. The Philosophy of Money begins with a discussion of the general forms of money and value. Later he moved to discussion on impact of money on the "inner world" of actors and on culture in general.

Check Your Progress

1. Explain the Marxist philosophy of money?

8.1.3 Money and Value:

One of the Simmel's concern were relationship between money and value. Acording to him "the exchange function as a direct interaction between individuals, will be crystallizes in the form of money as an independent structure" (Simmel 1900/1990: 175 quoted by Craig, page 153). He argued that people create value by making objects, separating themselves from those objects and then seeking to overcome the "distance, obstacles and difficulties." The greater the difficulty of obtaining the object the greater is its value. In general terms the value of things comes from people's ability to distance themselves from objects. The things that are too close, and easy to obtained are often not valuable. Also the things which are too far, too difficult and nearly impossible to obtain are also not often valuable to us. Most valuable things rae neither too distant nor too close. Factors responsible for making valuable or not valuable includes time, scarcity, the difficulties involved in obtaining it etc. People try to keep themselves at a proper distance from attainable objects.

In economic realm, money serves both to create distance from object and to provide the means to overcome it. In modern economy the value attached to the object places it at a distance from us.. We cannot obtain it without money. The difficulty in earning the money and the difficulty in obtaining it makes it valuable to us. Also when we have enough money we are able to overcome the distance between the object and ourself. Money thus performs an interesting function. Money creates connections and obligations between peoples and institutionalized relations with the use of coins, banknotes and contracts as a bank account. For example, relations of dominance and dependence become quantitative relationship for an individual who has more or less money - their status is on personal and rationally numerable. The use of money prevents individuals from things and provides the means to overcome this distance. Also, allows a much greater flexibility for individuals in society, like

traveling in greater distances, to accumulated as many as possible symbols by their validity, ownership or status and to overcome personal limitations.

8.1.4 Money, Reification and Rationalization:

In the process of creating value, money also provides for the development of the market, the modern economy, and ultimately modern society. Money provides the means by which these entities acquire a life of their own that is external to and coercive of, the actor. This provided a contrast of the earlier society based on barter or trade which did not result in reified world- a distinct feature of modern economy. Money permits this development in various ways. For example Simmel argued that money allows for "long term calculations, large scale enterprises and long term credits". Not only does money help create a reified world, it also contributes to the increasing rationalization of that social world.

With expansion of reified structures and monetary transactions becoming important part of society, Simmel saw a decline in the significance of the individual. In some sense it was difficult to see how money can take on the central role that it does in modern society.

Simmel thus suggests that the spread of the money form gives individuals a freedom of sorts by permitting them to exercise the kind of *individualized* control over "impression management" that was not possible in traditional societies. ... ascribed identities have been discarded. Even strangers become familiar and knowable identities insofar as they are willing to use a common but impersonal means of exchange. (Ashley and Orenstein, p. 326)

At the same time, personal identity becomes problematic, so that development of the money form has both positive and negative consequences. That is, individual freedom is potentially increased greatly, but there are problems of alienation, fragmentation, and identity construction.

8.1.5 Negative Effects:

A society in which money becomes an end itself, indeed the ultimate end has a number of negative consequences on individual. Two most remarkable of it are:

1. Increase in cynicism:

Cynicism is induced when both highest and lowest aspects of social life are for sale, reduced to common denominator- money. Thus one can "buy" beauty, truth or intelligence as easily as we can buy cornflakes and deodorants. Thus equating anything with money has resulted in the cynical attitude where anything can be bought and sold in the market.

2. Increase in the blasé attitude:

This money economy also include the blasé attitude where everything

seems equally dull and grey hue as not being excited about. The blasé person loses his ability to make differentiation between the value of the object being purchased.

3. Impersonal Relations:

Another negative effect of money economy is increasing impersonal relations amongst the people. Instead of dealing with individual and their personalities we are increasingly dealing with their positions like delivery man, the baker and so on regardless of the person holding that position. Thus in modern economic society as we depend more and more on others for our existence and survival we are less aware about the people who occupy those positions. The personality of an individual tends to hide behind the identities of the positions that they held.

4. Reduction of Human Values:

Another impact of money economy is the reduction of all human values to dollar terms. He gave example of exchange of sex for money. The expansion of prostitution can be attributed to growth of money economy. Thus there is an emphasis on quantitative rather qualitative factors in social world.

The key to Simmel's discussion of money's impact on style of life is in the growth of objective culture at the expense of individual culture. The gap between the two grows larger at an accelerating rate.

For Georg Simmel, the use of money in economic exchanges, always has to do with the individual who chooses to sacrifice something in order to optimize a desired thing. He believed that every social action is exchange action. Therefore, social interaction is the exchange of representations or symbols (money). According to Simmel, philosophical meaning of money within the practical world represent the safe figure and high formula of which personificate all beings, according to which things make sense through each-other and have their existence through their mutual relations. (Simmel, 1900/1990: 128-9, quoted in Craig, p. 152-3).

Check Your Progress

1. What are the negative affects of money?

8.6 CONCLUSION

Simmel's sociology can be regarded as similar to that of the other classic writers in some senses, although he had less to say about social structure or its dynamics than did Marx, Weber, or Durkheim He did

discuss objective culture and his writings on money have some affinity with Weber's rationalization. Where his contribution is notable for contemporary sociology is his view of society, the emphasis on social interaction, and his writings on the city.

Simmel discussed social and cultural phenomena in terms of "forms" and "contents" with a transient relationship. He was a forerunner to structuralist styles of reasoning in the social sciences. With his work on the metropolis, Simmel was a precursor of urban sociology and to that extent also influential in the future development of symbolic interactionism and social network analysis.

In The Philosophy of Money, Simmel provides us with a remarkably wide-ranging discussion of the social, psychological and philosophical aspects of the money economy, full of brilliant insights into the forms that social relationships take. He analyzes the relationships of money to exchange, the human personality, the position of women, individual freedom and many other areas of human existence. Later he provides us with an account of the consequences of the modern money economy and the division of labour, which examines the processes of alienation and reification in work, urban life and elsewhere. Perhaps, more than any of his other sociological works, The Philosophy of Money gives us an example of his comprehensive analysis of the interrelationships between the most diverse and seemingly connected social phenomena.

8.2 THE LEGACY OF SIMMEL TODAY

8.2.1 Introduction:

While Georg Simmel is widely known, the impact of his work has been far from straightforward, with the ways in which his ideas have been taken up by later thinkers as complex and diverse as the ideas themselves. *The Simmelian Legacy* is a comprehensive study of the work of this influential sociologist and philosopher and its reception in the Anglophone, German, and French intellectual worlds.

Simmel, has built his own view based on the ideas of Durkheim, Marx's, Hegel's and Kant's. His analysis of social structures, city, currency and modern society is similar to Durkheim's analysis, the problem of the individual and society is similar to Weber's work on the effects of rationalization. Simmel's work on the symbolism of money is similar to Marx's work on alienation. However, what makes it distinct Simmel's work by mentioned theorists, is its emphasis on social interaction at the individual and small groups level, because for Simmel, "the society is composed of interactions between and across individuals, and that sociologists should study the patterns and forms of these associations, which is better than the search for social laws.". Simmel's writings on the city and money, continue to be used by contemporary sociologists.

Simmel lived in the last half of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth, long before the internet, digital technology, and social media were invented, let alone could become so pervasive in everyday life. He was the first to uncover, isolate, and articulate the forms and patterns that underlie the organization of any and all societal units – from dyads to networks to nations – and to theorize how these structures affect their members and the dynamics of their members' interactions. His insights would be astonishing in any era, but are all the more so when their application to practices that he surely could never have imagined are considered. Many scholars credit Simmel with pioneering the structural approach to studying social life.

8.2.2 'The web of group-affiliations':

In 'The web of group-affiliations', Simmel explains that individuals in premodern, preindustrial times tended to come into contact with a relatively small number of the same other people wherever they went. Group affiliations could be characterized by a pattern of concentric circles, as groups (family, neighborhood, church) were relatively few in number and consisted of most of the same people. These circles could be seen as structurally subsumed within one another, collapsing into a single, not-very-diverse, whole. Both technological and cultural factors were at play – people could not easily travel great distances or contact distant others, and correspondingly there was limited need or desire to do so. As a result, the individual 'was wholly absorbed by, and remained oriented toward, the group', and, importantly, 'was treated as a member of a group rather than as an individual'.

With ever-accelerating industrialization, however, came sufficient advancement of transportation and communication technology that one could belong to multiple groups that consisted of numerous, diverse, sometimes far-flung others. Now, people could (and did) participate in many family, friendship, occupational and interest-oriented groups, some of which were independent of one another and others of which would intersect. These social circles began to overlap and proliferate in intricate ways and patterns, eventually spanning 'an infinite range of individualizing combinations'.

The structure of any society, Simmel writes, 'provides a framework within which an individual's non-interchangeable and singular characteristics may develop and find expression' (1955, p. 150). The internet and digital technology provide frequent and multiple opportunities for the expression of the characteristics of the self. Indeed, the abundant, near-continuous expression of unique characteristics and 'peculiarities' (as Simmel refers to human quirks in the also-groundbreaking 'The metropolis and mental life' that emerge in online and digital spaces can be seen as a hallmark of the internet age. Simmel also contends that as our group affiliations and modes of self-expression increase, every individual will find 'a community for each of his inclinations and strivings'.

Of the many metaphors currently used to represent internet- and digitally enabled structures (network, net, platform, cluster, even 'facebook'), the 'web' is perhaps the most commonly invoked. Simmel's work describes the development of sprawling weblike societal structures with elegance and precision. But it would be incorrect to affirm that he actually used the word 'web' in describing the shape that such structures can take.

Though it is unclear the extent to which Simmel's vision was exactly that of a 'web', it is clear that Simmel's work – and this essay in particular – maps onto and depicts the morphology and structural development of the internet and the 'World Wide Web' brilliantly.

8.2.3 Death and Legacy:

Simmel wrote prolifically throughout his career, penning more than 200 articles for various outlets, both scholarly and non-academic, as well as 15 very highly regarded books. He passed away in 1918, after succumbing to a battle with liver cancer.

Simmel's work laid the foundation for the development of structuralist approaches to studying society, and to the development of the discipline of sociology in general. His works proved especially inspiring to those who pioneered the field of urban sociology in the United States, including the Chicago School of Sociology's Robert Park.

Simmel's legacy in Europe includes shaping the intellectual development and writing of social theorists György Lukács, Ernst Bloch, and Karl Mannheim, among others. Simmel's approach to studying mass culture also served as a theoretical foundation for members of The Frankfort School.

Even though he left no established school of thought or direct disciples, Simmel greatly influenced the development of both sociology and philosophy. His ideas, dispersed through the different areas in which he wrote, left their mark on the future generations of scholars.

Simmel's study of groups and group-behavior has gained some important insights that would later be used in social psychology and sociology.

8.3 CONCLUSION

George Simmel is undervalued and underrated among the great classical theorists. His work provides theoretical and analytical tools upon which such critical perspectives as social network analysis have been built. It outlines how group affiliations and social interactions develop and impact both the individual and the society. And it presages a world in

which the finding and forming of social connections via digital technology is constant and ubiquitous, with rampant consequences, many of which we are just beginning to discern. But while his influence is widely acknowledged in sociological circles (albeit not widely enough for my taste), his salience to the fields of communication, information, and technology studies is acknowledged far too irregularly.

8.4 SUMMARY

The Philosophy of Money:
Probably considered Simmel's greatest work. Simmel saw money as a component of life that helped us understand the totality of life. It demands to be read today and for years to come as a stunning account of the meaning, use and culture of money.

Money and Value:
Simmel believed people created value by making objects, then separating themselves from that object and then trying to overcome that distance. He found that things that were too close were not considered valuable and things that were too far for people to get were also not considered valuable. It was also considered in determining value was the scarcity, time, sacrifice, and difficulties involved in getting the object.

Negative Effects:
As money and transactions increase, the value of the individual decreases and everything becomes about what the individual can do instead of who the individual is. Another negative effect of money is the effect it has on people's beliefs. Everything boils down to dollars and cents instead of emotional value.

In this book, Simmel is concerned with money as a symbol, and what some of the effects of this are for people and society. In modern society, money becomes an impersonal or objectified measure of value. This implies impersonal, rational ties among people that are institutionalized in the money form. For example, relations of domination and subordination become quantitative relationships of more and less money -- impersonal and measurable in a rational manner. The use of money distances individuals from objects and also provides the means of overcoming this distance. The use of money allows much greater flexibility for individuals in society -- to travel greater distances and to overcome person-to-person limitations.

Legacy:

Simmel's work laid the foundation for the development of structuralist approaches to studying society, and to the development of the discipline of sociology in general. His works proved especially inspiring to those who pioneered the field of urban sociology in the United States, including the Chicago School of Sociology's Robert Park.

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Simmel's study of groups and group-behavior has gained some important insights that would later be used in social psychology and sociology.

8.5 UNIT END QUESTION

1. Explain Simmel's philosophy of money.

8.6 REFERENCES

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MODEL QUESTION PAPER
PAPER 1
CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Total Marks : 60 **Duration : 2 Hours**

N.B:

1) Attempt All Questions
2) All Questions carry equal marks

Q1. Explain "Human Nature" from a Marxian Perspective 15 marks

Or

What are the Historical Stages in the Development of States? 15 marks

Q2. Explain the Concept of Social Fact. 15 marks

Or

Explain Durkheim's Theory of Suicide 15 marks

Q3. Analyse Weber's Contribution to Social Action. 15 marks

Or

Discuss the Role of Protestant Ethics in the Development of Capitalism. 15 marks

Q4. Give a brief account of Simmel's areas of concerns. 15 marks

Or

Explain the Legacy of Simmel Today. 15 marks

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