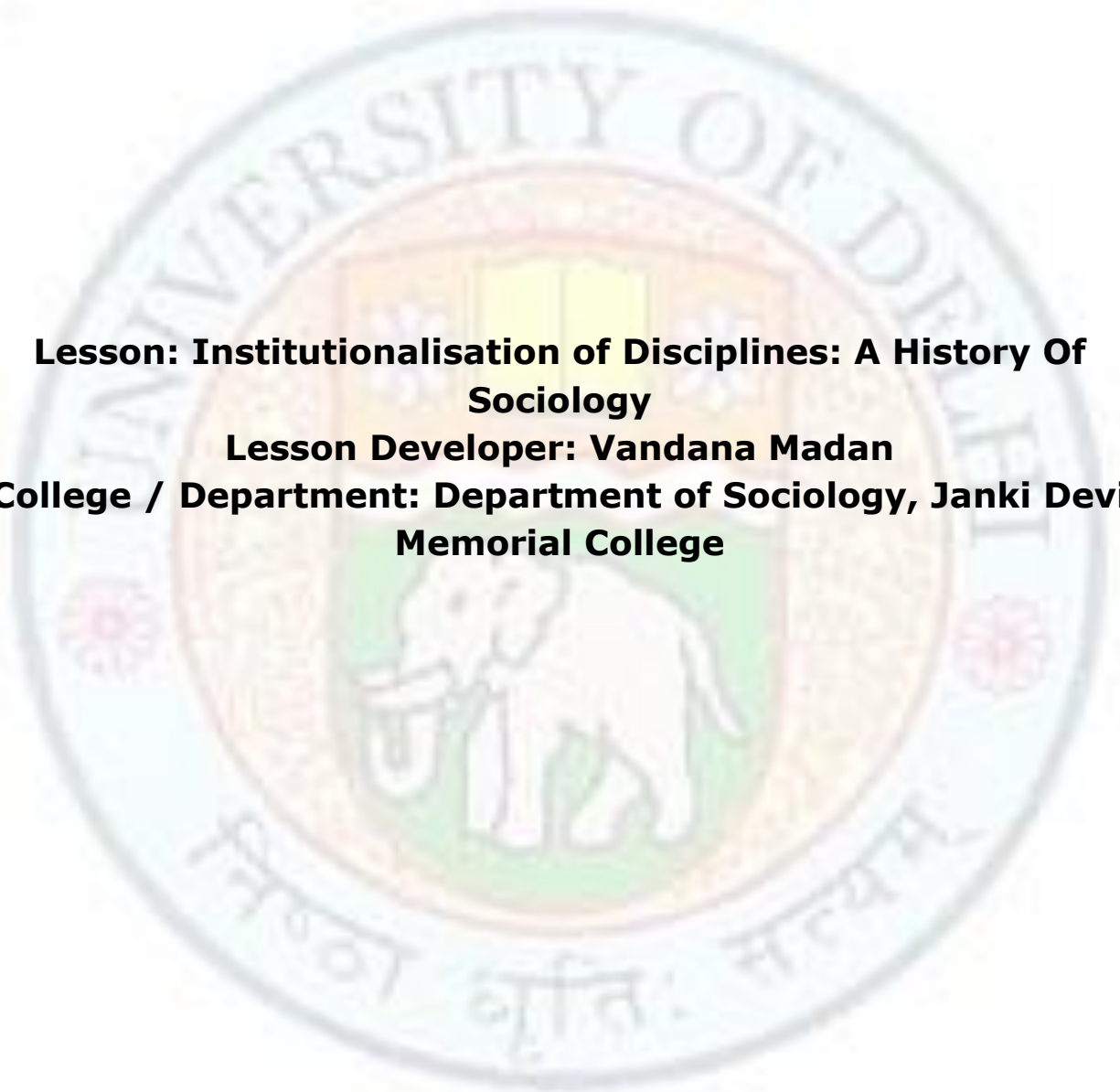


**Lesson: Institutionalisation of Disciplines: A History Of
Sociology**

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1.1: BIRTH OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

An understanding of the development of the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology in the social sciences is closely related to the history of European society

Scholars generally agree that, the industrial revolution and the French revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries together laid the foundation of the idea of society as both an object of study and reform. The development of Sociology and Anthropology within the social sciences signified not just the birth of new disciplines and new academic points of view, but also closely reflected an understanding of this emerging new social order.

Up until the revolutions, in medieval Europe, the word of God as revealed through the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church was regarded as the only epistemological authority. It was believed that divine law stood apart from natural law and was the only source of man's redemption.

The Renaissance that spanned roughly the 14th to the 17th century, began in Florence and then spread to the rest of Europe, was not just a cultural movement that led to significant social and political upheaval but it also gave birth to an **intellectual revolution** that modified this epistemology radically. Thus it came to be asserted that God was not the 'creator' of Nature but was "expressed" through nature. This was indicative of a shift in the view of the importance of natural law and the power of reason.

It was also indicative of the belief that as God was expressed in nature, and nature was accessible through reason, therefore God was also accessible through reason. The immensity of the divine no longer seemed insurmountable as reason could now provide a solution to the unanswered aspects of life.

Once this conceptual transformation was complete, long before what we know as **Enlightenment**, a gradual shift took place in Western philosophy from reliance on faith to a reliance on experience and reason as the primary source for legitimacy and authority. This shift threatened the **Church and Christian authority** who now realized that any claim they made to the privileged access to the Ultimate and the "divine power" over things would now be easily threatened by the institution of **Science** which could reveal the truth about nature.

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This was also the essence of Enlightenment, for at its core was a critical questioning of traditional institutions, customs, and morals, and a strong belief in rationality and science. With Enlightenment in Europe, the claims of reason as a means of knowing natural law were thus strengthened. It was also acknowledged that nature was part metaphysical and also physical. Thus attention needed to be paid to the methods suitable for understanding physical phenomena. As a result **reason** came to be supplemented by **experience and experiment**.

Alongside this ode to reason, by the 17th century in Europe, different political and religious traditions gradually arose which influenced the course that Enlightenment took and proved crucial to the history of social thought since the 18th century. These were the **intellectual revolutions** in France, England and Germany which came to be intertwined. The birth of such intellectual sharing and influence was a product of the environment of the societies where these scholarly works arose. Though intertwined historically there were also significant differences between the three traditions which nevertheless together influenced the progress of the social sciences.

Value addition: Did you Know

If we look at the history of the social sciences we find that while Issac Newton and James Locke were the architects of intellectual radicalism in England, and deeply inspired the French philosophers; Hume in Scotland, and Rousseau in France gave direction to German idealism

Source: original

1.2 THE INTELLECTUAL TRADITION IN FRANCE, ENGLAND AND GERMANY

1.2.1: The French tradition

The French, who were Catholic, were rationalists more than they were empiricists. Nevertheless they believed that knowledge was a process whereby true propositions were deduced from fundamental axioms. For them the mode of intellectual and institutional authority was the hierarchical and absolute Catholic Church. However overtime, the French became intellectually inclined towards rationalism and they constructed a system of thought as all embracing and as monistic, as the ecclesiastical and monarchial systems they challenged.

1.2.2: The English tradition

The English, who were Protestants, on the other hand said that man's knowledge can never be more than partial, fragmentary and uncertain. For them knowledge was a process whereby truth was induced from experiential observation of particular facts and their connections. To them the mode of intellectual and institutional authority was the individual. In England, the inclination was towards empiricism and the acquisition of partial knowledge made possible by liberty and equality of rights assured by the new state.

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Thus while for the French, authority was above the individual who was subject to its decree, for the English there was no longer a collective authority which demanded submission. It is clear that Enlightenment was not an entirely French affair, yet it was in France almost exclusively, in the 18th century that theories were proposed to extend the **empirical method** of the physical sciences to society.

The rhetoric of nature and reason was dealt with by two central theories in 18th century France.

- One political theory kept within the convention implied by the rhetoric and provided no answers. This was Baron Charles –Louis Montesquieu treatise expounded in The Spirit of Laws.
- The other political theory was one which had a more lasting effect and answered the relation of nature and reason and was expounded by Jean Jacques Rousseau in his Discourses.
- While Montesquieu believed that every society was self sustaining and reason enables reform such that men adjust rather than revolt; Rousseau glorified the state of nature arguing that it is society that engenders inequality and dependence, and thus it is society that will provide the answers.
- Man could eliminate the negative and the irrational through living as a social being
- It was this sense of morality that gave birth to the famous philosophical idea of the Social Contract which argued that man had an inviolable moral sense and using it would free man to discern the correct laws for social living

Germany was different from both England and France.

1.2.3 The German tradition

In the 18th century there was increasing emphasis on the importance of intellectual self determination, and the virtues of rationalism and empiricism were insisted upon by scholars such as Immanuel Kant. Kant was deeply influenced by Rousseau's understanding of man and society.

Kant provided a clear exposition and logical defense of a conception of the individual as partly natural and thus determined and yet, free and independent of God, of nature and of society. He also believed that man was a product of natural circumstances brought to the edge of Enlightenment in modern civilization through the exercise of rational will. History was the process by which man exercises this will and dares to question what is given so as to seek knowledge and thus rational truth.

Kant's significant successors were Hegel and Karl Marx.

Hegel's political theory was consistent with this philosophy and the conception of civil society. Hegel questioned Kant's idea of universal history as being only one product in the successive history of thought. Hegel was deeply influenced by Greek philosophers and the idea of harmony in nature between politics, art and religion. This was the substantial unity that creates the ethical idea of the State. Hegel not only believed in a close relationship

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between civil society and the State but also asserted that Constitutions arose from the consciousness of persons in society and thus civil society was necessary to mediate between individual and the State .

The questions that were however raised by the French, English and German philosophers along with the defense by Enlightenment of the conviction that man was a product of society , gave birth to an '*epistemological muddle*'.It is this muddle and the questions thus raised that became the reason for the rise of the intellectual tradition of the social sciences and the discipline of Sociology

1.3: THE RISE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The use of the expression, moral and political sciences took place first in France in the 1760's and the **term social sciences** was coined in the circle of intellectuals who were close to the French philosopher and political scientist Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet (1743 – 1794), known also as **Nicolas de Condorcet**. Condorcet's ideas and writings were said to embody the ideals of the age of Enlightenment and rationalism and spread to England and then Scotland and the German speaking countries.

The transformation of the moral and political sciences into what became partially institutionalized at the end of the 18th century as the "social sciences" cannot be understood without taking into account the conceptual innovations made in response to other areas of expertise such as administration and law.

Unfortunately the **history of the social sciences** as it is taught today ignores these social and the intellectual contexts for the emergence of these sciences .Thus a "tunnel view" of history shapes our understanding of the emergence of the social sciences and modernity with little attention paid to ideas that were defeated.

Although social science came to study society, knowledge gathering could not free itself from the common sense of the time which often questioned the perceptions of the classical scholars. Processes of social transformation also influenced the way in which social sciences grew. Nevertheless the growth of the social sciences came to focus on the West as the home of modernity and tradition as the identity of the "other".

1.3.1: Modernity, secularization and the social sciences

The concern with modernity was central to the development of the social sciences in Europe in the 18th and 19th century. Modernity was seen as a process that led to a break with the past and the loss of roots and tradition.

Much of classical sociological literature concerned itself with the description of modernity as opposed to tradition, convention and authority .Thus an understanding of the growth of the

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social sciences also became important as a means of understanding institutional transformation in Europe and its relation to the understanding and governing of “colonies”.

At the same time in Europe the emergence of the social sciences in the late 19th century, reflected an intellectual revolution in response to the narrative of secularization, with its emphasis on the differentiation between market, society, and politics on one hand as separate from the domain of religion.

Thus an understanding of secularization theory along with the debate between tradition and modernity became central to the growth of the social sciences. It was in such an atmosphere that classical Sociology emerged with its concern with providing a sufficient image of the social life of the time

1.3.2: Social science and Rationality

Many question why the sociological perspective developed in Europe?

A reason given often is the rapid social change that was brought about by Capitalism and the industrial revolution in modern Europe .The philosopher and sociologist Max Weber hypothesized that an important factor was Western rationality rooted in biblical religion, Hellenic reason and Roman law. This rationality made it possible to have the cataclysmic transformations of modern capitalism and modern technology which were crucial for social change.

Indeed the sociological perspective is founded on this rationality and the need to understand the social transformations that accompanied the birth of capitalism and modern technology. Which is why the discipline from its inception saw itself s a science. It was this rationality which also gave Sociology its subversive character and the belief that it had to work towards a betterment of society. According to the sociologist Peter Berger (1981), this “tinkering” motive in Sociology is what linked it to the ideals of Enlightenment; the aspiration of establishing a more “rational and ...humane social order” (p.14).This motive also became central to the context of secularization for as the religious norms to organize social life paled, it became important to reorder human affairs in a rational manner.

1.3.3 Social Science and Natural Science

The first scientific step was taken when Greek philosophy discovered the idea of rational proof. Aristotle’s logic even though fragmentary was the bearer of the idea of rationally organized world of thought .The increasing importance of rationality and its transformation into scientific experimentation and generalization into empirical procedure occurred under the **Renaissance artists** who were in constant touch with material---metal ,stone ,wood, leather .The artist constantly experimented with anything. The best illustration of such an artist is **Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1599)** ---painter, sculptor, architect, biologist and engineer. Deeply inspired by Archimedes, Leonardo da Vinci searched for the spirit of scientific naturalism and experimentation.

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(Leonardo da Vinci)

From da Vinci came the idea that experience would give birth to dependable knowledge.

Did you Know

The amazing genius of da Vinci



Da Vinci not only experimented, invented and painted but he was one of the first to actually examine and draw a human foetus in a womb in 1510!

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci

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Thus **Copernicus (1473-1543)** established the heliocentric theory. This shift from philosophy to art was central in the growth of the scientific temper.

The final move towards science is seen in the work of **Galileo Galilei(1564-1642)**, who constantly sought to establish "exact laws " for things and their reasons to exist. He presented with completeness and distinctness, a new scientific role.



Thus over the centuries through the work of philosophers, historians artists and scientists, the scientific experimental method was formed .Once established it was understood that this method would be used beyond the exploration of the physical world.

Though the Church opposed the spread of the scientific temper ,a crucial role in this spread was played by **Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)**.

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Bacon believed in the significance of scientific rationality and the need to observe and tabulate facts as these would help understand the laws that held facts together. A full mastery of nature and the betterment of mankind was visualized and the possibility of the birth of a social science emerged. So did a spirit of scientific inquiry, often called the Baconian method or simply, the scientific method. Bacon's demand for a planned procedure of investigating all things natural marked a new turn in the rhetorical and theoretical framework for science, much of which still surrounds conceptions of proper methodology today.

Thus a model for a genuine social science came from science itself. Indeed as mentioned above, Bacon played an important role in the visualizing of a social science.

Some trivia

Bacon's disastrous experimentation

The scholars of the era of Renaissance and Enlightenment were constantly seeking knowledge. But they were not always smart about what they did! Often their experiments had disastrous consequences. In March, 1626, Sir Francis Bacon came to London, and shortly after, when driving on a snowy day, the idea struck him of making an experiment as to the *antiseptic properties of snow*! Of course the experiment was a disaster but much worse Bacon caught a chill, which ended in his death on 9th April 1626.

Source: <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/bacon/bio.php>

It was in the 17th and 18th century that achievements of new social sciences led to the birth of a conception of reality which would remove mental and social phenomena from the realms of the supernatural and view them as mastered by the human understanding. This point of view, was crucial to ethics, philosophy, law and politics and came to be represented by what we know as **Enlightenment**.

1.3.4 Social Science and Enlightenment

One of the major doctrines of the Enlightenment believed that individual and social life can be interpreted and regulated in terms of a set of self evident principles available to reason

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i.e., rationalism. It was this birth of reason that gave rise to the social sciences, as it freed social thought from the grip of tradition and religiosity and secularized institutions and processes as well as the nature of knowledge. Beyond a certain point however, the Enlightenment could make no contribution to the development of social science. It nevertheless created a rational spirit and a lawfulness and naturalness of social phenomena.

By the end of the 19th century all the social sciences were established into empirical disciplines. As new historical tools were forged Enlightenment and romantic methods were synthesized. This synthesis of history, philosophy, politics and empirical science gave birth to the discipline of Sociology in the work of **Auguste Comte** described often as the **father of Sociology**.

The gradual development of historiography and the development of objective empirical methods for assembling and evaluating social materials led in the 19th century to the creation of schools of Sociology.

1.4 SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Sociology was clubbed in the 19th century with the disciplines of Economics and Political Science. Together these early social science disciplines developed as academic responses devoted to theorizing the recently secularized domains and represented and promoted the idea of a modern secular self and society of the West. On the other hand, Anthropology and Orientalism came to study the rest, i.e., "the leftovers" believing that what was non-European, pre-modern, uncivilized, uneducated, could be defined as a space where religion and tradition held sway.

Overtime in the West, Sociology and Anthropology came to be institutionally separated and differentiated in terms of the theory, methodology and the subject matter.

Sociology came to be conventionally understood to focus on the study of modern industrial society and Anthropology on the study of primitive, tribal and pre-modern societies, i.e., the other culture imagined by the West.

In other words, while the history of Sociology is linked to the post-Enlightenment project of modernity, the evolution of modern social and political theory and the development of a scientific approach to the study of man and society; the discipline of Anthropology came to connect the evolution of the discipline with the technologies of domination of the West over the non-West.

What this meant was that besides their connection to the process of secularization the growth of the two disciplines was also closely related to the process of colonialism and its discovery of the "other". As a result for long the emphasis of the discipline of Sociology was on the scholarship of the West, with the Asian, African and the Polynesian serving as "sites"

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where “fieldwork” was carried out by the Anthropologist. We now discuss separately the emergence and growth of the two disciplines.

1.5 EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY

1.5.1 Definition

It is not easy to have a precise definition of the discipline. According to the social anthropologist Andre Beteille, this is because the subject matter of the discipline of Sociology is in a constant state of flux. The main concern of Sociology is with understanding the nature of human actions and social events within a given context. It has a body of concepts, methods, and data that give it a distinct shape.

Broadly speaking sociology deals with:

- social structure
- social processes
- social institutions
- social change

This enables a deeper understanding of society.

Sociology is both general and particular. That is, it is general in its theoretical concerns and particular in how it addresses facts of a given social context. According to the sociologist Morris Ginsberg, Sociology is the study of human interaction and interrelations, their conditions and consequences. He also argues that social behaviour can be understood through sociological givens or “laws” and even statistical generalizations. All parts of a society and social existence are interrelated, somehow organic, in the sense that its parts function together and changes in one lead to changes in another. Thus societies need to be studied as wholes and the interaction between various elements understood.

Put very simply, Sociology is the study of society and social behavior.

1.5.2 History of the discipline and its growth

The discipline of Sociology is over 150 years old and must be seen as an ongoing enterprise of research study and teaching. The discipline in fact arose first as a new point of view in Western philosophy and then progressed through the refinement of theory and method into an independent field, nevertheless with significant ties to other Western disciplines. In the initial years of its growth, most schools of sociological theory in fact drew their inspiration from Western philosophy.

Sociology has had to fight with other disciplines in the social sciences to carve out a niche for itself. Its best definition lies in tracing its growth in the context of the evolution of thought in Western civilization which passes from religion, through philosophy to science. Like common sense it is concerned with the everyday, and yet unlike commonsense it seeks

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freedom from value suppositions. This latter nature of the discipline is obviously so based on the subject matter that it is concerned with, i.e., human life and social behaviour.

1.5.3 Sociology and Philosophy

Sociology has had close relations with philosophy and many see it as an offspring of the discipline. Philosophy was the matrix that gave birth to Sociology in the 19th century.

The progress from theology to philosophy is regarded as one of the greatest achievements of the human mind, as it freed the mind from the grip of religion and tradition and set the pace for modernity, rational thought and the eventual birth of positivism. While Western philosophy became the discipline that logically summarized knowledge that was available, the task of explaining new facts about society and developing criteria for ascertaining their authenticity fell upon Greek historians and philosophers of politics.

1.5.4 Sociology and Politics

Among the Greek thinkers, politics and ethics were not separate disciplines, but two divisions of the wider study of man as a social being. This in turn was subordinate to a more general theory of nature and man's place in it. In modern times while Political Science came to concern itself with forms of government, authority and administration, Sociology arose as an extension of the field of political inquiry to cover institutions other than the state, such as family, forms of property, culture, art and religion.

1.5.5 Sociology and History

The crucial root of Sociology however is believed to be the philosophy of History which in modern times was the attempt to interpret the whole course of human history as a part of a broader philosophical view. From this Sociology can be said to have arisen as a reaction against sweeping generalizations, unsupported by inductive inquiry. Sociology had a way of seeing things that were not obvious and thus had a subversive character as it questioned established norm. In this it thus differed from history which was a given.

1.5.6 Greek historians

The development of historiography led to the rise of a precision in investigation of social facts. Some of the early concepts in Sociology however also arose in opposition to History and all its forms. Greek historians such as Herodotus, Xenophon and Thucydides were the first few to speak of research and investigation. Herodotus who was born in 484 B.C. is regarded as the world's first ethnologist. Thucydides was a rationalist and sceptic and questioned Herodotus and suggested the need for first hand information to understand phenomenon. He was also social scientific in his speeches. Their work and conceptions of history were dissipated in the work of rhetoricians such as Ephorus and Theopompus.

1.5.7 Roman historians

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The Romans added little to historiography and many believe that by the time of Suetonius, history had disintegrated into "mere gossip". In the medieval world, the conception of historiography degenerated further---only chronology found meaning and chronicling became the method of presenting historical facts.

1.5.8 Renaissance

It was in the Renaissance that a renewed sense of historical responsibility arose and the conflict between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism gave rise to new forces that were more responsible in their writing of history and led to the birth of the modern archives. The historian of the 18th century played a crucial role in giving birth to a secular philosophy of history. Scholars such as Voltaire, Montesquieu and Hume together came to symbolise the Enlightenment view of history. Thus traditional authority was questioned; progress was projected as a universal theme and triumph of reason seen as a goal.

1.6 SUBJECT MATTER OF SOCIOLOGY

Historically, Sociology has its roots in all three of the above mentioned disciplines---politics, history and philosophy. It was also realized that the modernizing of existence was closely tied up with retaining roots in tradition. This holistic nature of society led to the belief that a society is made of elements that make up a whole. This knowledge led to the need for a general and systematic sociology.

Sociology grew gradually using data already given by history. Its eventual separation from philosophy was long anticipated by the departure of natural sciences there from and the establishment of the social sciences. Because Sociology is such a broad discipline, it can be difficult to define, even for professional sociologists. The field generally concerns the social rules and processes that bind and separate people not only as individuals but also as members of associations, groups, communities and institutions. It further includes the examination of the organization and development of human social life as a general purpose within the social sciences.

As a matter of caution however, the sociologist Peter Berger has argued that no scientific method can deal with all of human reality in a comprehensive and unproblematic way. Science views its objects in a selective, partial manner. More important science cannot provide moral guidelines for action even less can it provide a doctrine of salvation. That is where the role of the social sciences emerges as crucial. And this is why from its inception Sociology has seen itself as a **science of society**.

The discipline of Sociology was not just a new approach to the study of society but it was a discipline that grew with its subject matter, i.e., society.

Such a conception of Sociology and the tools of sociological enquiry and investigation were first created in the late 19th century in the intellectual atmosphere that had arisen in England, France and Germany (See section 1.2). Thus Sociology evolved as an academic response to the challenges of modernity such as industrialization, urbanization, secularization, and a perceived process of enveloping rationalization.

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This atmosphere gave birth to the work of scholars who everyone accepts as **founding fathers** or central figures in the growth of modern Sociology. These scholars represent through their work not only seminal ideas in the growth of Sociology but also represent the theoretical atmosphere of the main centers where Sociology flourished. Each scholar influenced the growth and definition of the discipline in his own distinct way.

1.6.1 SAINT-SIMON (1760 – 1825)



The earliest influence on the growth of the discipline of Sociology came from the work of Claude Henri de Rouvroy, **comte de Saint-Simon**, often referred to as Henri de Saint-Simon or simply Saint-Simon. He was a French socialist whose thought influenced the foundations of various 19th century philosophies; perhaps most notably Marxism and the discipline of Sociology.

Saint-Simon questioned the nature of established society in those times and argued that the inequalities of feudal and military systems could be opposed by Socialism. He advocated

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a form of state capitalist-technocratic socialism, an arrangement where industrial chiefs should control society. He also questioned the authority of the Church, believing that it was only the **men of science** who were fit to organize society for productive labour and was thus entitled to rule it. Saint-Simon was not particularly systematic, but his great influence on modern thought is undeniable, Apart from the details of his socialist teaching which were conditioned by the French Revolution, the ideas of Saint-Simon as to the reconstruction of society are very simple. He argued that in all forms of society men struggle to survive and to strive to gain a higher social position .He described this sense of avarice as the "the Hand of Greed" and saw it as a destructive social practice that had to be demolished .For Saint-Simon, science was the key to progress that would help man establish a rational way of life.

1.6.2 AUGUSTE COMTE (1798- 1857)

Auguste Comte was not only a French philosopher but also deeply influenced by Saint-Simon. He is also regarded as the **founder of the discipline of Sociology**. Comte was deeply affected by the events of the French revolution and sought the establishment of a new moral order based on objective laws. He was concerned with putting together a social science that could deal with social institutions and interrelationships between phenomena and disciplines .He thus created the discipline of Sociology as an abstract and theoretical science of social phenomena .To him the social upheaval that followed the French revolution could be dealt with only by a rational objective model of social life derived from the sciences He called these ideas **positive philosophy or positivism**.

Comte endeavored to unify history, psychology and economics through the scientific understanding of the social realm. He proposed that social ills could be remedied through sociological positivism. He outlined his thesis as an epistemological approach outlined in *The Course in Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842) and *A General View of Positivism* (1844) .



Comte presented Sociology as a polemic against traditional Philosophy which he denounced as metaphysical. His use of the term positivism symbolized this. This new positive

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Philosophy which he later called **Sociology**, relied directly on history for its subject matter. The task of the new subject according to Comte was to establish laws of the regularities of social events which he believed were supplied by history. Thus the historians work remained crucial to Sociology.

The polemic against traditional Philosophy should not obscure the fact that his basic point of view was derived from Philosophy and the new field was thought of as a philosophic movement. Thus the disciplines of Philosophy and History not only presided over the birth of Sociology but the discipline turned to both for guidance in its early years. Comte believed that evolution of human society parallels the development of the human intellect. Thus society, human activity and the human mind pass through successive stages of historical evolution.

Comte proposed **three such stages or laws in social evolution** believing that every society undergoes three phases in its quest for the truth based on these laws. These are:

- The **theological** stage was when man seeks the divine to explain phenomena. It was seen from the perspective of 19th century France as preceding the Enlightenment, in which man's place in society and society's restrictions upon man were referenced to God.
- The **metaphysical** stage was known as the stage of investigation, because people started reasoning and questioning although no solid evidence was laid. The stage of investigation was the beginning of a world that questioned authority and religion. Here man turns to abstract forces as explanations for phenomena.
- The **positivistic** stage where all phenomena are now explainable in terms of scientific principles and laws came into being after the failure of the revolution.

This last stage of positivism was seminal to his thesis and was seen clearly by Comte in his reference to social phenomena being scientifically explained through two ideas:

- the idea of *social statics*: i.e., the inquiry into the mutual actions and reactions of contemporaneous social phenomena. Under social statics, major institutions or institutional complexes of society such as the economy, polity family, etc. ,are taken as the major units of sociological analysis. Sociology is seen as a study of interrelations between such institutions. The parts of a society according to Comte had to be seen as parts of a whole rather than as independent units. This idea of interconnectedness was the most crucial aspect of his approach.
- While statics studied how parts of societies interrelate, *social dynamics* was a reference to the laws that enabled change in a society overtime. Comte believed that all societies moved through certain fixed stages that took them towards ever increasing perfection.

Although Comte presented one of the earliest systematizations of the discipline of Sociology, the phenomenon of society had been studied long before him in the 17th century and had been differentiated from the physical and human sciences. The modern sociological

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perspective believes that autonomous and covert dynamics of human collective entities are its main concern. This meant that to perceive society one had to question what was deemed as social and sociological. Comte provided not only a new understanding of society but also was a religious leader who provided a scientific and modern critique of colonialism.

Interesting detail

Comte and his 'religion'

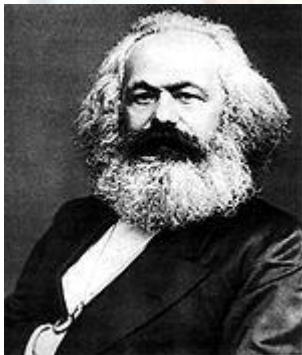
Besides being the founding father of Sociology, Comte also developed a religion of

humanity. This is a picture of the Positivist temple in Porte Allegre, Brazil.



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auguste_Comte

1.6.3 KARL MARX (1818-1883)



Karl Marx's work borrowed from Hegel's idea of dialectical materialism which was an idea that rejected the notion of positivism put forward by Comte. Hegel had been particularly critical of mere collection of empirical facts. He insisted that the social and natural world had to be clearly distinguished and this was not easy.

Although Marx never use the term Sociology and was not a sociologist, his philosophical writings had a great impact on Sociology in the 20th century. Marx rejected Comtean sociological positivism, but in attempting to develop a *science of society* nevertheless came to be recognized as a founder of Sociology as the word gained wider meaning.

We discuss him here briefly as he was significant in his contribution to the development of what has come to be recognized as the conflict perspective in the social sciences. Deeply influenced by the work of Hegel, Marx was concerned primarily with the idea of social change. For him the changing and restructuring of society was the fundamental focus of his

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work. Through social change he believed that men would overcome their situation and question the given state in which they lived. Self liberation came from questioning in every historical epoch the given relations of inequality that were created by the political economy.

This was in keeping with the Enlightenment idea of the daring to know that all is not ordained by God .His work in fact was deeply critical of religious thought and religion which he called the **"opiate of the masses"**. He believed in the philosophical idea of dialectical materialism where men struggle for survival and competition would end when the working people (proletariat) became politically conscious of their state .Such a cycle of change would occur through the history of all society and would ultimately result in the rise of a classless society or socialism. For Marx, the economy was the fundamental building block of any society. The economic principle according to him was the central principle that would lead to the evolution of ideas, philosophical systems, politics, ethics and religion. He argued that it was not society that gave birth to new ideas but new ideas that gave birth to new society once man became conscious of his social state and engaged in social revolution.

Interesting detail

Poetry in Marx's writing

We often find the writings of Marx hard to understand and interpret but often what he wrote read like poetry .When he wrote about the need to define labour he said that human nature involves transforming the world of nature. To this process of transformation he applied the term "labour ", and to the capacity to transform nature the term "labour power". Marx's words were :

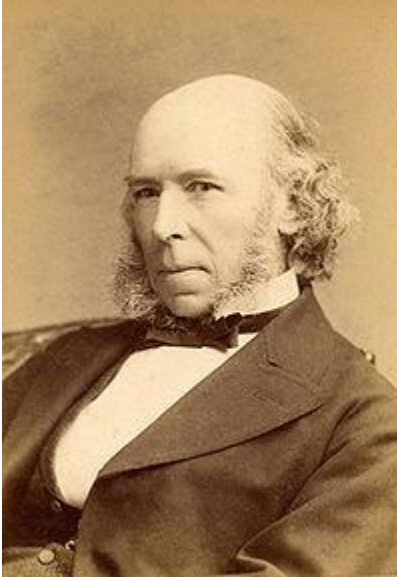
“ A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. ”

— (*Capital*, Vol. I, Chap. 7, Pt. 1)

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_marx

1.6.4 HERBERT SPENCER (1820-1903)

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While Comte coined the term Sociology, and Marx proposed one of the earliest theses on social change and its understanding sociologically, it was really in Spencer's work that the field and subject matter of Sociology was laid down. For Spencer, society could be understood as a progressing through three phases:

- **Organic analogy** –where society was visualized as an organism made up of interrelated parts This view considerably influenced contemporary system theory and structural functionalism
- **Evolutionary theory**—argued that every society does not go through the same stages of development as proposed by Comte .Instead society changes the simple to the complex and then from a military to industrial society which represented a growing complexity;
- **Social Darwinism**--- which for Spencer was the idea of the survival of the fittest was coined by him in his work *Principles of Biology* (1864), after reading Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Through this he brought the social and the scientific together by extending the idea scientific evolution into realms of sociology and ethics, He was an untiring advocate of individualism and yet he believed that man could not interfere with the order of nature.

Spencer developed an all-embracing conception of evolution as the progressive development of the physical world, biological organisms, the human mind, and human culture and societies. Spencer's three volume work called *Principles of Sociology* published in 1877 was the first ever attempt to explain what was meant by sociological analysis. He made a clearer attempt at defining the nature of subject matter for Sociology which was reflective of the concerns that sociology continues to have today such as the aspect of social control, family politics religion and so on .Spencer's work was able to establish that the subject matter of Sociology could reflect certain stability. Spencer in his positivist orientation believed that parts or elements of a society were discrete units that bore some constant relation with each other which turned society into a meaningful entity and a fit subject for scientific enquiry. The evolutionary progression from simple, undifferentiated

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homogeneity to complex, differentiated heterogeneity was exemplified, Spencer argued, by the development of society. He developed a theory of two types of society:

- Militant society -- which corresponded to this evolutionary progression. Militant society, structured around relationships of hierarchy and obedience, was simple and undifferentiated
- Industrial society-- based on voluntary, contractually assumed social obligations, was complex and differentiated.

Society, which Spencer conceptualized as a social organism, evolved from the simpler state to the more complex according to the universal law of evolution. Moreover, industrial society was the direct descendant of the ideal society developed by Comte in his idea of *social statics*.

1.6.5 EMILE DURKHEIM (1858-1917)



Though Comte is generally regarded as the "Father of Sociology", the discipline was formally established by another French thinker, Emile Durkheim, who developed positivism as a foundation for formal academic sociology with a firm emphasis on **practical social research**. Under Durkheim, Sociology was established as a Science. While Comte never gained legitimate entry into academia and Spencer spurned the academic, Durkheim set up the first course and first chair in Sociology in the European Department of Sociology at the University of Boudreaux in 1895.

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In 1895 he also published his *Rules of Sociological Method* and as the true positivist who firmly believed in the scientific aspect of Sociology, Durkheim asserted in this work that the aim of the sociologist is to extend scientific rationalism which was the source of positivism and positivistic thought.

In 1898, he established the journal *L'Année Sociologique* as a means of sharing ideas with his students and emerging sociologists about the newly developing sociological paradigm. Overtime because of the focus of the journal its title came to be used as a term to refer to the distinctive approach of this group and the work they produced in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Durkheim is considered to be the first empirical sociologist and his sociological realism was a frontal attack on Spencerian individualism. He believed individualism to be the bane of industrial societies as it led to the break down of social solidarity and the collective conscience of a community. This resulted in the rise of **anomie** which means social **breakdown**. Durkheim believed the collective to be far superior to the individual and that a society was not a mere sum of its parts. His understanding of social solidarity has been central to the **functionalist approach in Sociology**.

Durkheim did not attempt to present a conception of Sociology and its subject matter in as much detail as the others. His spirit was closer to Enlightenment. His methods were positivistic and close to the natural sciences. But he believed that Sociology could not become a science until it could delineate a wide range of institutions and processes to be studied as specializations. And until it questioned the grip that religion had on social life. Durkheim's seminal monograph, *Suicide* (1897), a case study of suicide rates amongst Catholic and Protestant populations raised significant questions about how religion failed to provide answers to social problems.

Durkheim saw society as consisting of three principle divisions: social morphology, social physiology and general sociology. Each was a branch of Sociology and dealt with a set of social facts, i.e., activities related to social groups and sustained by them.

Durkheim saw society as a reality that was self perpetuating or 'sui generis', but the method of Sociology was not determined by this quality but by the abstract concept of "what science ought to be" in its quest to question the given order of nature and the Church. That is, in the Durkheimian tradition, the **is** and the **ought** were not separate. Instead there was an easy nexus between the two. This often led to a lack of clarity between the boundaries of scientific understanding and normative judgment.

This lack of clarity was transferred from Durkheim into the Anglo-American social science traditions such as seen in the 20th century work of Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton.

Although he took a broad view of institutions and social processes, like Comte and Spencer Durkheim emphasized the importance of analyzing the relationships among institutions and between them and their settings. Each social fact must be related to a social milieu and the environment in which they are formed and expressed. Thus society was a crucial unit of social analysis. He described Sociology as a science of society, most clearly elucidated in his *Rules of Sociological Method*.

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1.6.6 MAX WEBER (1864-1920)

Regarded as the greatest sociologist of his time, Weber made substantive contributions to almost every branch of Sociology and the social sciences. He was primarily interested in the subjective meaning of social action. He was also concerned with the **disenchantment** (a loss of the sense of self) and alienation that was caused by the rise of capitalism and modernity.

That Sociology was a science and not just a doctrine was most clearly visible in the work of Max Weber, for whom the process of rationalization was the innermost force of modernity. Weber was passionately dedicated to the question of clarifying what the sociological way of "seeing" is. While he was committed to a notion of scientific rationality of the modern West, he also believed that human phenomenon did not speak for them, but had to be interpreted.

This was the core of Weber's methodology and was the clarification of the act of interpretation or **verstehen**, a central method in social science; a systematic process by which an outside observer attempts to relate to a particular cultural group, or indigenous people, on their own terms and from their own point-of-view. This was not just methodical in nature but also had a human dimension. He also stressed the importance of maintaining objectivity and neutrality of value judgments in the social sciences.

Weber thus provided a concrete and historically minded treatment of Sociology for he believed that the aim of Sociology was to interpret and understand social behaviour. Weber's spirit avoided both the positivistic version of Sociology found in Comte and the Utopian version of the sociological enterprise found in the work of Karl Marx. Instead he believed that both had to be repudiated to revitalize the sociological enterprise. He did propose an elaborate system of classifying social acts and social relationships but spend his time devoted to the study of institutions and not social action.

Did you know?

Marx vs Weber

The Weberian tradition was very different from the Marxian tradition where there was no separation between the "is" and "ought" of society. The reason was not because of a positivistic ideal of science but because society was seen by the Marxists under the philosophy of history where scientific understanding seemed impossible except as apart of philosophical procedure. At the end of the procedure is the Utopian vision of the future as a classless existence. Many scholars argue that this vacillation between Positivism and Utopianism may have been a reason for why Sociology as a discipline was initially not taken seriously, for the sociologist often

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wore a mantle of prophecy, but often the prophecies were false.

Source: original

Weber's, major works dealt with the scientific rationality and disenchantment which arose with capitalism and modernity. He was a central figure in presenting Sociology as a non-empirical field which must study social action through subjective means. Weber argued that Sociology could be loosely described as a Science whose aim was to interpret the meaning of social action and the impact of this action on the nature of human behaviour. Weber established the first department in Germany at the University of Munich in 1919.

Along with Marx and Durkheim, Weber is typically cited as one of the three principal architects of modern social science, and as the most important classic thinker in the social sciences who was a prolific scholar and wrote on almost every subject. It is in his work that a clear distinction was made between *pure sociology and applied sociology*.

1.7 CONCLUSION

Although these classical scholars cited above expressed themselves differently and represented the influence of different intellectual traditions and contexts, they were largely in agreement about the subject matter of Sociology.

All urged the sociologist to study a wide range of institutions from the state to the family. Each believed that the unique subject matter of Sociology is to be found in the interrelations among different institutions. They concur in the opinion that a society as a whole can be taken as a distinctive unit of sociological analysis with Sociology assigned the task of explaining why societies are alike or different. Finally there is an attempt to stress the need to focus on social acts or social relationships. This was most clearly expressed in the work of Weber.

It is also important to note that the work of these scholars gave rise to the main theories that became fundamental to the discipline of Sociology. Thus we find that:

- the work of Comte set the stage for the beginning of the **unilinear Evolutionary theory**
- from Spencer we have the beginning of the idea of universal **evolution and functionalism** ;
- from Durkheim, we gained the basic principles of **structuralism functionalism**
- from Marx we have **conflict theory** .

It is important to remember that Marx's work also gave birth to the critical school called the **Frankfurt School in Germany** in the early 20th century with the neo-Marxist such as Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas who were conflict oriented and drew upon the work of Marx and Max Weber as well as the Freudian theory of individual

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motivation and personality. This critical theory in the post war years came to expand beyond its sociological birth and became a significant aspect of literary criticism

In fact under the influential work of Jurgen Habermas, the orthodox Marxist theory of capitalism was revised .and critical theory became an important school of thought in conflict sociology in the mid 20th century.

American Sociology and British Sociology arose towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century .Both contexts contributed more to the growth of Anthropology than Sociology and their trajectory was symptomatic of the colonial and imperialistic interest in domination of the "other"

We only mention them here briefly as they are discussed in detail in the section on Anthropology, the subject to which their contribution was far greater.

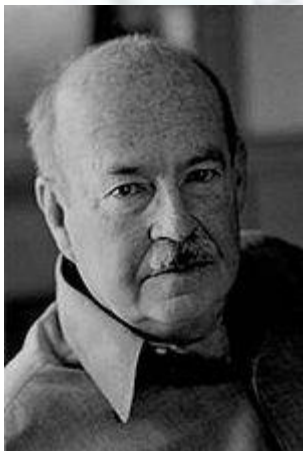
1.7.1 American Sociology

American sociology broadly arose on a separate trajectory, with little Marxist influence, and with an emphasis on rigorous scientific methodology in keeping with the ideals of positivism.

Between 1875 and 1895, several departments and schools of Sociology were established in American Universities. The Sociology that grew in these universities was deeply concerned with the nature of institutions' and the impact of urbanization on the collective and individual .Scholars of the Chicago University, where the schools of social psychology and symbolic interactionism were created, played a significant role in the growth of the discipline.

Two significant journals the American Journal of Sociology and the American Sociological Association were created in Harvard 1895 and 1905.

As the discipline grew slowly in America, an important role came to be played in bringing the French and German tradition represented by Durkheim and Weber ,to American Sociology ,by the American sociologist Talcott Parsons(1902 - 1979)



Parsons consolidated the sociological tradition and set the agenda for American sociology at the point of its fastest disciplinary growth. Sociology in the United States was less

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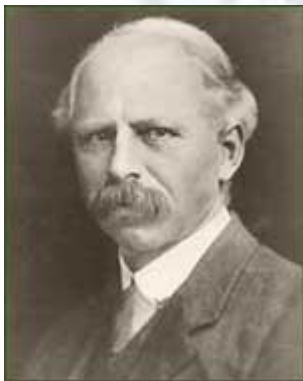
historically influenced by Marxism than its European counterpart, and to this day broadly remains more statistical in its approach

The ideals of positivism were crystallized most significantly in Parsons who served on the faculty of Harvard University from 1927 to 1973. Parsons developed a general theory for the study of society called action theory which attempted to establish a balance between two major methodological traditions, that of the utilitarian-positivist tradition (represented by Comte and Spencer) on the one hand and the hermeneutic-idealistic tradition on the other (represented by Weber). For Parsons, voluntarism (represented in the work of Durkheim and Vilfredo Pareto) established a third alternative between these two. More than a theory of society, Parsons presented a theory of social evolution and a concrete interpretation of the "drives" and directions of world history. Often regarded as a structural-functionalism, Parsons saw structural functionalism as a particular stage in the methodological development of the social science; it was never a name for any specific school or specific direction.

The significance of Parsons also lies in the fact that he was one of the most prolific scholars in the discipline of Sociology, writing on a multitude of topics, and also the fact that his approach of Functionalism came to play a crucial role in the birth of Anthropology in the mid 20th century.

1.7.2 British Sociology

There is little work of significance from the middle of the 19th to the 20th century in the British arena. Britain contributed more in this time period to the growth of Anthropology (see lesson on Anthropology). Nevertheless it is important to mention that the first Sociology department to be established in Britain was at the London School of Economics. The first chair of Sociology was occupied by L.T. Hobhouse, the philosopher and social scientist, in 1906.



(Hobhouse)

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It is at the London School that the *British Journal of Sociology* was started in 1950. Between 1911 and 1929, Sociology remained an intellectually floating discipline here, divided between an academic school around Leonard Hobhouse at the LSE and an extra-mural one around Patrick Geddes at the Sociological Society. The discipline acquired significance with the introduction of the method of statistical surveying under Geddes who was concerned with patterns of urban change. After 1935, however, despite the growth of a scientific trend in Sociology with the growth of objective research methods the sociological movement slowed down due to a lack of any institutional entry into the academic debate surrounding the emergence of social sciences at the time. As in the case of America, the emergence of social anthropology countered any furtherance of Sociology as autonomous and scientific disciplines in the late 1930s.

EXERCISES Exercises 1

- 1.1 What were the three intellectual traditions that gave birth to the social sciences?
- 1.2 What was the contribution of the natural sciences to the birth of the Social sciences?
- 1.3 Briefly discuss the relationship of Sociology with other Social science disciplines.
- 1.4 What was the significance of positivist philosophy in the birth of modern Sociology?
- 1.5 Highlight the seminal contributions of the French and German founding fathers to the growth of the discipline of Sociology.

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	Match the following	

Question

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Match the following:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Spencer b) Durkheim c) Weber d) Comte e) Saint Simon f) Parsons g) Immanuel Kant h) Marx | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) anomie ii) verstehen iii) Logic iv) evolutionary theory v) opiate of the masses vi) men of science vii) American Sociology viii) positivism |
|--|---|

Correct Answer / Option(s)

- a) and iv)
- b) and i)
- c) and ii)
- d) and viii)
- e) and vi)
- f) and vii)
- g) and iii)
- h) and v)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

Spencer is regarded as the father of the evolutionary approach in Sociology even though Darwin too had written significantly on the idea of evolution. Hence a) matches iv). Durkheim coined the phrase anomie to explain social breakdown. Thus b) matches i). Weber coined the concept of interpretive sociology or verstehen. Therefore c) matches ii). Comte was the first to speak of a positivist philosophy. Thus d) matches viii). Saint –Simon stressed the need for a scientific outlook among scholars and called for “men of science” to change the way in which society was understood. Thus e) matches vi). The school of American sociology was pioneered by Talcott Parsons. Therefore f) matches vii). Immanuel Kant was a philosopher who proposed the importance of logical thinking. Hence g) matches iii). It was Karl Marx who said that religion has the effect of preventing man from rational thought a sit was like opium. Therefore h) matches v).

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Other combinations are false due to reasons mentioned above.

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
	True or False	

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Question

True or False?

- Enlightenment was not an entirely French affair.
- The social sciences grew in isolation
- Modernity was central to the development of the social sciences
- The sociological perspective developed in Europe

Correct Answer / Option(s)

- True
- False
- True
- True

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

- Is true, because the desire to reform and bring rational thought into social life and its understanding was taking place not only in France but in England and Germany as well. While the French were rationalists and scientific in spirit, the English were Protestants and challenged the Catholic Church in their search for freedom from religious authority which would allow them to pursue scientific enquiry.
- Is false. The social sciences did not grow in isolation because the intellectual atmosphere of the period of Enlightenment was alive with debate between the different natural sciences and the social sciences
- Is true, because the birth of modernity led to the rise of secularization. Both these processes questioned the significance of tradition. This line of thinking was central to the rise of the social sciences
- Is true because the birth of capitalism and rationalism were central in creating social change in Europe. The social sciences grew so as to be able to understand this social transformation taking place in European society.

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
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3	Multiple choice	
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Question

Choose the correct answer:

- Leonardo da Vinci was the first to talk about (a) heliocentric theory (b) exact laws (c) experimentation (d) observation and tabulation
- Enlightenment was the process that (a) was experienced by the Buddha (b) led to the rejection of the natural sciences (c) led to the proletarian revolution (d) gave birth to rationalism and the process of secularization
- The birth of Sociology as a discipline was the result of the (a) rise of positive philosophy (b) the rise of religion as an opiate of the masses (c) social breakdown or anomie caused by individualism (d) failure to engage in objective understanding or verstehen

Correct Answer / Option(s)

Answer: (c)

Answer: (d)

Answer: (a)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

- Leonardo Da Vinci is seen as the father of scientific experimentation and was one of the first scholars to engage in nature based experiments
- Enlightenment was the process that gave birth to rationalism and a scientific spirit as well as freedom from the grip of the Church and religion.
- The birth of Sociology as a discipline was based on the emergence of the rational way of thinking which came to be defined as positivist philosophy.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Only (c) is correct even though other scholars from the 14th to 16th century engaged in attempts at scientific study, because Da Vinci was the most systematic and the most successful in his experiments.

Only (d) is correct because it was with Enlightenment that the importance of rationalism and secularization came to the fore front and it became clear that for societies to progress a certain freedom from the supernatural was essential.

Only (a) is correct because for the birth of Sociology as a discipline an objective

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approach based on scientific principles was needed .This was provided by positivistic thought

Reviewer's Comment:

Further readings

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