

STUDY MATERIAL CBCS II SEMESTER

Auguste Comte

French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) greatly advanced the field of social science, giving it the name "sociology" and influenced many 19th-century social intellectuals.



Major Contributions

The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte (1830-42)

Appeal to Conservatives (1889)

The Catechism of Positive Religion (1891)

Positivism

In the six-volume *Course of Positive Philosophy* Comte argued that, like the physical world, society operated under its own set of laws.

Positivism is the term used to describe an approach to the study of society that relies specifically on scientific evidence, such as experiments and statistics, to reveal a true nature of how society operates.

Positivism as a philosophy of science relies on the approach the principles and procedures of the natural sciences are applicable to the study of social phenomenon. Comte was interested in establishing theories that could be tested with the ultimate goal of improving our world once these theories were clearly laid out. He was eager to discover natural laws that applied to society.

He viewed the natural sciences, such as biology and physics, as a necessary step in the development of a social science. Just as gravity is a universal truth we all experience in the physical world, Comte believed sociologists could uncover similar laws operating on the social level of people's lives.

Comte's uniqueness lay therefore not in originating Positivism but in placing it within a theory of history that claims human culture developed (and always must develop) in three stages:

1. **Theological:** In this stage human beings rely on supernatural agencies to explain what they can't explain otherwise.
2. **Metaphysical:** In this stage human beings attribute effects to abstract but poorly understood causes.
3. **Positive:** Human beings now understand the scientific laws that control the world.

The characteristics of positivism are

- Science is the only valid knowledge.
- Fact is the object of knowledge.
- Philosophy does not possess a method different from science.
- The task of philosophy is to find the general principles common to all sciences and to use these principles as guides to human conduct and as the basis of social organization

Criticisms

- Though, Comte claimed to be the father of positivism or scientific approach; he himself was not committed to it.
- Timasheff opines, Comte's sociological theories represent a premature jump from the level of observation and inferences to the level of theory.
- According to John Stuart Mill, Comte's religion does not stand the test of rationalism because that can never be put into practice.
- Comte's religion was born out of his "moral intoxication". Auguste Comte gave maximum importance to the scientific method.

In spite of criticisms, his insistence on positive approach, objectivity and scientific attitude contributed to the progress of social sciences in general.

Law of Three Stages

The "Law of Three Stages" is an idea developed by Auguste Comte. It constitutes one of the main contributions of Comte to the field of sociological thought.

Comte's famed "law of the three stages" is an example of his search for invariant laws governing the social world. Comte argued that the human mind,

individual human beings, all knowledge, and world history develop through three successive stages.

According to Comte, each branch of our knowledge passes successively through the different theoretical conditions. This is known as law of three stages. The main aim of this principle is to provide the basis of sociological thinking.

According to Comte, the evolution of the human mind has paralleled the evolution of the individual mind. Just as an individual tends to be a staunch believer in childhood, a critical metaphysician in adolescence and a natural philosopher in manhood, so mankind in its growth has followed three major stages. Comte believed that each field of knowledge passes through three periods of growth pattern.

Comte felt that one of the most basic laws of human organization is the “law of the three stages,”. He termed these stages the theological-military, metaphysical-judicial and scientific-industrial or “positivistic”.

1. Theological or fictitious stage

In this stage human beings rely on supernatural agencies to explain what they can't explain otherwise. The theological stage is dominated by a search for the essential nature of things, and people come to believe that all phenomena are created and influenced by gods and supernatural forces.

According to Comte in this stage, “all theoretical conceptions, whether general or special bear a supernatural impress”. Unable to discover the natural causes of the various happenings, the primitive men attributed them to imaginary or divine forces.

This stage is also divided into three sub-stages.

(a) **Fetishism** - The primitive persons everywhere tend to think in supernatural terms. They believe that all phenomena are “produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings.” They believe in all kinds of fetishes in which spirits or supernatural beings live.

(b) **Polytheism** - When the mind of primitive man became better organized, fetishism became cumbersome. Too many fetishes created

confusion. Hence, they started believing in several gods. During this sub-stage, man begins to believe in magic and allied activities.

(c) Monotheism - Finally, they developed the idea of one god, or of monotheism. They started believing in the superhuman power of only one god.

2. The Metaphysical/Abstract Stage

Comte said that this stage started around the middle Ages in Europe, or somewhere around the 1300s. In the metaphysical stage of society, people viewed the world and events as natural reflections of human tendencies. People in this stage still believed in divine powers or gods, but they believed that these beings are more abstract and less directly involved in what happens on a daily basis. Instead, problems in the world are due to defects in humanity.

3. The Positive/Scientific Stage

The positivist stage is the last and highest stage in Comte's work. In this stage, people search for invariant laws that govern all of the phenomena of the world. Comte's final stage for society is called the positive stage just like the name implies, here people view the world and events as explained by scientific principles.

In short these stages represent different and opposed types of human conception. The most primitive type is theological thinking, which rests on the "empathetic fallacy" of reading subjective experience into the operations of nature. As civilization progresses, the metaphysical stage begins as a criticism of these conceptions in the name of a new order. In the final stage of positive science the search for absolute knowledge is abandoned in favor of a modest but precise inquiry into the relative laws of nature.

Social Statics and Dynamics

Just as in biology it is useful to separate anatomy from physiology, so it is desirable to make a distinction in sociology between statics and dynamics. It corresponds with the double conception of order and progress: order consists in a

permanent harmony among the conditions of social existence, and progress consists in social development." Order and Progress, statics and dynamics, are hence always correlative to each other.

Social Statics

The statical study of sociology consists in the investigation of the laws of action and reaction of the different parts of the social system apart, for the occasion, from the fundamental movement which is always gradually modifying them." It studies the balance of mutual relations of elements within a social whole. There must always be a "spontaneous harmony between the whole and the parts of the social system." When such harmony is lacking, we are confronted by a pathological case.

According to his thought of *collective organism* he places families at the level of an element, classes and caste of a tissue and cities and towns of an organ. Aware of the limitations of such analogy Comte concluded them by stating language, religion and division of labour as the unifying or binding forces of society.

Language is the "easiest and common way of communication", making it an essential tool for binding people closely to each other in a community.

Religion compensates the weaknesses of language by binding the society on the basis of a few common beliefs, acting as a "positive guide". It ties the society by morality not letting it fall apart because of the disparities among people.

Finally, *division of labour* binds the society together on basis of "similarity of classes" but is feared of distancing men from a larger mass as they are more driven towards their personal interests over the societies.

Social Dynamics

Social dynamics is a branch of social physics that deals with the laws, forces, and phenomena of change in society ,it is an approach to sociology focusing on the empirical studies of societies and

social systems in the processes of change in years gone by. The processes and forces of change at work in any social group.. Social dynamics is a mathematically inspired approach to analyses societies, building upon systems theory and sociology.

Social dynamics looks at all of the things that can change a social group. It is the study of the ability of a society to react to inner and outer changes and deal with its regulation mechanisms. It deals with the forces in society that provide for change and or conflict and with those aspects of social life that pattern institutional development and have to do with social change.

Comte placed greater emphasis on the study of social dynamics, or social change. For the dynamical view is not only the more interesting, but the more marked in its philosophical character, from its being more distinguished from biology by the master-thought of continuous progress, or rather of the gradual development of humanity.

Hierarchy of the Sciences

Comte's second best known theory that of the hierarchy of the sciences or classification of sciences is intimately connected with the law of three stages. Just as mankind progresses only through determinant stages, each successive stage building on the accomplishments of its predecessors; so scientific knowledge passes through similar stages of development. But different sciences progress at different rates. "Any kind of knowledge reaches the positive stage early in proportion to its generality, simplicity and independence of other departments."

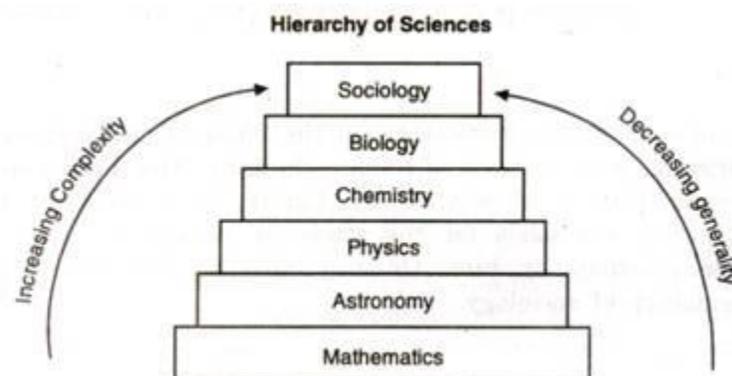
Comte classified knowledge on the basis of observation of scientific or positive level of human thinking. The main aim of the classification of science by Comte is to prepare the background and basis for the study of society, Sociology, a science invented by him. On this also he determined the methodology of sociology. Comte thought that each Science came into being not arbitrarily. It has come to seek the "Laws" of a particular kind or level of facts which man had encountered in his

experience of the world. Each Science is concerned with some definite event or subject matter and these constitute the subject of its study.

Comte spoke of sociology is the “crowning edifice” of the hierarchy of sciences. He did not mean that it is in any sense superior to any other science; but only that it serves to bring all other sciences into relationship with each other, in the overall intellectual history of man. Comte says, Astronomy, the most general and simple of all natural sciences develops first. It is followed by physics, chemistry, biology and finally sociology. Each science in this series depends for its emergence on the prior developments of its predecessors in a hierarchy marked by the law of increasing complexity and decreasing generality.

According to Comte behind and before all these sciences however lies the great science of mathematics – the most powerful instrument the mind can employ in the investigation of natural law. The Science of mathematics must be divided into abstract mathematics or the calculus, and concrete mathematics embracing general geometry and rational mathematics. So we have thus really six great sciences.

The classification of sciences follows the order of development of the sciences. It indicates their social relation and relative perfection. In order to reach effective knowledge the sciences must be studied in the order named. Sociology cannot be understood without knowledge of the anterior sciences.



Comte arranged the sciences so that each category may be grounded on the principal laws of the preceding category and serve as a basis for the next ensuing category. The order hence, is one of increasing complexity and decreasing generality.

The simplest phenomena must be the most general - general in the sense of being everywhere present. In the hierarchy, Comte places mathematics on the lowest rung and the topmost rung is occupied by Sociology.

David Émile Durkheim

(1858 to 1917) was a French sociologist, social psychologist and philosopher. He formally established the academic discipline and is commonly cited as the principal architect of modern social science and father of sociology.



Major contributions

The Division of Labour in Society (1893)

The Rules of Sociological Method (1895)

Suicide (1897)

The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (1912)

Social Facts

Social Facts are one of Emile Durkheim's most significant contributions to sociology. Social facts are things such as institutions, norms and values which exist external to the individual and constrain the individual.

As far as Durkheim was concerned this was no different to the concept that human life is greater than the sum of the individual cells which make it up – society has a reality above that of the individuals who constitute it.

A key idea of Durkheim – that we should never reduce the study of society to the level of the individual, we should remain at the level of social facts and aim to explain social action in relation to social facts.

In this way sociology should aim to be scientific, it should not study individuals, but scientific trends at the level above the individual. This is basically the Positivist approach to studying society.

Characteristics of Social Facts

Social facts have three properties:

- **General** - They are general throughout society. They are diffused throughout the group.

- **External** - Social facts exist outside the individual, are prior to him, and exist independently of their will.
- **Constraining** - They often have some sort of sanction, manifested in coercion or ostracism, against any individual who resists them.

Observing Social Facts

Social facts, for Durkheim, are things, not ideas. Things have reality, and can be observed. As things, then can be studied in the same way that natural science can study molecules. Social facts are not produced by individual will, but by external social coercion.

Theory of suicide

Suicide is any death which is the immediate or eventual result of a positive (e.g., shooting oneself) or negative (e.g., refusing to eat) act accomplished by the victim himself.

Durkheim explores the differing suicide rates among Protestants and Catholics, arguing that stronger social control among Catholics results in lower suicide rates. According to Durkheim, Catholic society has normal levels of integration while Protestant society has low levels which result in high suicide rates.

Durkheim argues that the suicide rate is a social fact - something that is external to any individual. It is a product of the social structure of any given society. Durkheim figured that by examining the different types of suicide, he could identify key elements of social organization.

1. **Integration** is the extent of social relations binding a person or a group to others, such that they are exposed to the moral demands of the group.
2. **Regulation** is defined as the normative or moral demands placed on the individual that come with membership in a group.

Types of suicide

Egoistic suicide. This type of suicide occurs when the degree of social integration is low. When a person commits this type of suicide they are not well supported in a social group. They feel like they are an outsider or loner and the only people they

have in this world are themselves. They often feel very isolated and helpless during times in their lives when they are under stress.

Altruistic suicide. This type of suicide occurs when the degree of social integration is too high. When a person commits this type of suicide they are greatly involved in a group. All that they care about are that groups norms and goals and they completely neglect their own needs and goals. They take their lives for a cause. A good example of this would be a suicide bomber.

Anomic Suicide. This kind of suicide is related to too low of a degree of regulation. This type of suicide is committed during times of great stress or change. Without regulation, a person cannot set reachable goals and in turn people get extremely frustrated. Life is too much for them to handle and it becomes meaningless to them. An example of this is when the market crashes or spikes.

Fatalistic suicide. People commit this suicide when their lives are kept under tight regulation. They often live their lives under extreme rules and high expectations. These types of people are left feeling like they've lost their sense of self.

Division of Labor

Durkheim's concept of the **division of labor** focused on the shift in societies from a simple society to one that is more complex. He argued that traditional societies were made up of homogenous people that were more or less the same in terms of values, religious beliefs, and backgrounds. Modern societies, in contrast, are made up of a complex division of labor, beliefs, and backgrounds.

In traditional societies, the collective consciousness ruled, social norms were strong, and social behavior was well regulated. In modern societies, common consciousness was less obvious, and the regulation of social behavior was less punitive and more restitutive, aiming to restore normal activity to society. He has classified the solidarity into two headings.

1. **Mechanical solidarity** occurs when individuals within structural units are alike and self-sufficient. For example, in traditional societies, people grew their own food, made their own clothes, and had little need for extensive social contact with others because they did not have to rely on others for daily needs.
2. **Organic solidarity** is when a large population is stratified into smaller structural units. There's a high level of interdependence among individuals and structures, but there's still a division of people along the lines of labor or type.

Durkheim recognized that things like increased communication, transportation, and interaction with others resulted in the social change from a mechanical solidarity to organic. If societies evolve too quickly from traditional to modern, a breakdown of norms and collective consciousness occurs. The concept of community and social constraints becomes weakened, and this leads to disorder, crisis, and anomie.

Religion and totem

“A unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things that is to say, things set apart and forbidden”.

The Elementary Forms of Religious Life 1912 is a book that analyzes religion as a social phenomenon. Durkheim attributes the development of religion to the emotional security attained through communal living. His study of Totemic societies in Australia led to a conclusion that the animal or plant that each clan worshipped as a sacred power was in fact that society itself.

According to Durkheim, Religion is a division of the world into two kinds of phenomena.

1. The Sacred

The sacred refers to things human beings set apart; including religious beliefs, rites, deities or anything socially defined as requiring special religious

treatment. On one hand, the sphere of sacred is the area that pertains to the numerous, the transcendental, the extra-ordinary.

2. The Profane

Profane is just the opposite of Sacred, which is not sacred that is called profane. On the other hand, the sphere of the profane refers to the realm of everyday utilitarian activities. When a number of sacred things maintain relations of coordination and sub-ordination with one another so as to form a system of the same kind, this body of corresponding beliefs and rites constitutes a religion.

Functions of religion

- Collective consciousness, which is the fusion of all of our individual consciousnesses, creates a reality of its own.
- social control any control, either formal or informal, that is exerted by a group, especially by one's peers.
- Social cohesion the bonds or "glue" that maintain stability in society.

Totem

A **totem** is a spirit being, sacred object, or symbol that serves as an emblem of a group of people, such as a family, clan, lineage, or tribe.

Émile Durkheim, examined totemism from a sociological and theological point of view, attempting to discover a pure religion in very ancient forms and claimed to see the origin of religion in totemism.

Durkheim used his analysis of totemism to demonstrate the social origins of knowledge and the underlying unity of religious, philosophical, and scientific thought. Australian social organization was quite complicated, with tribes divided and subdivided into exogamous moieties ("halves"), classes, and clans, each associated with different species, in a system that incorporated all natural phenomena.

Totemism was not just a way of thinking but also of acting and feeling, organized around the separation of the domains of "sacred" and "profane" that, for Durkheim, constituted the essence of religion itself. More sacred than the totem animals themselves were the *churinga*, bull roarers of wood or stone with schematic

representations of the totemic ancestors painted upon them. Uninitiated women and children were forbidden to see them on pain of death, and loss or destruction of one of them was considered catastrophic.

Karl Henrich Marx (1818 To 1883)

Marx was a German thinker, economist, historian, philosopher, journalist and sociologist. He is credited to be the father of modern "communism". His major contributions to the field of sociology are as follows.

- *Economic and Political Manuscript (1843)*
- *The Holy Family (1845)*
- *The Poverty of Philosophy (1847)*
- *Communist Manifesto (1848)*
- *The Class Struggle in France (1850)*
- *Das Capital (1867)*

Historical Materialism

Marx's theory, which he called "historical materialism" or the "materialist conception of history" is based on Hegel's claim that history occurs through a dialectic, or clash, of opposing forces. Hegel was a philosophical idealist who believed that we live in a world of appearances, and true reality is an ideal. Marx accepted this notion of the dialectic, but rejected Hegel's idealism because he did not accept that the material world hides from us the "real" world of the ideal; on the contrary, he thought that historically and socially specific ideologies prevented people from seeing the material conditions of their lives clearly.

Marx's analysis of history is based on his distinction between the means of production, literally those things, like land and natural resources, and technology, that are necessary for the production of material goods, and the social relations of production, in other words, the social relationships people enter into as they acquire and use the means of production. Together these comprise the mode of production; Marx observed that within any given society the mode of production changes, and that European societies had progressed from a feudal mode of production to a capitalist mode of production.

The capitalist mode of production is capable of tremendous growth because the capitalist can, and has an incentive to, reinvest profits in new technologies. Marx considered the capitalist class to be the most revolutionary in history, because it constantly revolutionized the means of production. In general, Marx believed that the means of production change more rapidly than the relations of production. For Marx this mismatch between base and superstructure is a major source of social disruption and conflict. The history of the means of production, then, is the substructure of history, and everything else, including ideological arguments about that history, constitutes a superstructure.

Under capitalism people sell their labor-power when they accept compensation in return for whatever work they do in a given period of time (in other words, they are not selling the product of their labor, but their capacity to work). In return for selling their labor power they receive money, which allows them to survive. Those who must sell their labor power to live are "proletarians." The person who buys the labor power, generally someone who does own the land and technology to produce, is a "capitalist" or "bourgeois."

Marx, however, believed that capitalism was prone to periodic crises. He suggested that over time, capitalists would invest more and more in new technologies, and less and less in labor. Since Marx believed that surplus value appropriated from labor is the source of profits, he concluded that the rate of profit would fall even as the economy grew. When the rate of profit falls below a certain point, the result would be a recession or depression in which certain sectors of the economy would collapse. Marx understood that during such a crisis the price of labor would also fall, and eventually make possible the investment in new technologies and the growth of new sectors of the economy.

Marx believed that this cycle of growth, collapse, and growth would be punctuated by increasingly severe crises. Moreover, he believed that the long-term consequence of this process was necessarily the empowerment of the capitalist class and the impoverishment of the proletariat. He believed that were the proletariat to

seize the means of production, they would encourage social relations that would benefit everyone equally, and a system of production less vulnerable to periodic crises. In general, Marx thought that peaceful negotiation of this problem was impracticable, and that a massive, well-organized and violent revolution was required. Finally, he theorized that to maintain the socialist system, a proletarian dictatorship must be established and maintained.

Marx held that Socialism itself was an "historical inevitability" that would come about due to the more numerous "Proletarians" having an interest in "expropriating" the "bourgeois exploiters" who had themselves profited by expropriating the surplus value that had been attributable to the proletarians labor in order to establish a "more just" system where there would be greatly improved social relations.

Concept of Class

According to Marx "class is the manifestation of economic differentiation".

A class is any aggregate of individuals who perform the same function in the organization of production. From above mentioned definition it is clear that a class in Marxian terminology is economic in nature along with great social importance. Class is not determined by the occupation nor income but the position and of a person in the process of production.

Marx defines a class as all those persons who share a relationship to the means of production. The owners of means of production constitute a dominant class such as landlords, capitalists etc, and the working class constitute a sub-ordinate class including peasants, tenants and industrial workers.

The relationship between the two classes is not only domination or sub-ordination but also the exploitation. Marx believed that the human society is stratified into two social groups "have's" and "have-not's".

Class Conflict or Struggle

According to Marx all history is the history of class conflict. In all stratified societies there are two social groupings, a ruling class and a subject class. The ruling class derives its power from ownership and control of the forces of production and

exploit as well as oppress the subject class. As a result there is a basic conflict of interest between the two classes.

Class conflict and struggle occur because of the economic organization of most societies. According to the Marxist perspective, class conflict and struggle are inevitable in capitalist societies because the interests of workers and capitalists are fundamentally at odds with each other. Capitalists accumulate wealth by exploiting workers while workers maintain or advance their own well-being only by resisting capitalist exploitation. The result is conflict and struggle, which is reflected in all aspects of social life, from unionizing efforts to strikes to political campaigns to immigration policies.

One of the most powerful sociological explanations of social conflict is that of Karl Marx, who posited a class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie intrinsic to capitalist, industrial society.

It is important to recognize that Marx viewed the structure of society in relation to its major classes, and the struggle between them as the engine of change in this structure.

As Marx saw the development of class conflict, the struggle between classes was initially confined to individual factories. Eventually, given the maturing of capitalism, the growing disparity between life conditions of bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the increasing homogenization within each class, individual struggles become generalized to coalitions across factories. Increasingly class conflict is manifested at the societal level. Class consciousness is increased, common interests and policies are organized, and the use of and struggle for political power occurs. Classes become political forces.

The distribution of political power is determined by power over production (i.e., capital). Capital confers political power, which the bourgeois class uses to legitimize and protect their property and consequent social relations. Class relations are political, and in the mature capitalist society, the state's business is that of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, the intellectual basis of state rule, the ideas justifying the use

of state power and its distribution, are those of the ruling class. The intellectual-social culture is merely a superstructure resting on the relation of production, on ownership of the means of production.

Finally, the division between classes will widen and the condition of the exploited worker will deteriorate so badly that social structure collapses: the class struggle is transformed into a proletarian revolution. The workers' triumph will eliminate the basis of class division in property through public ownership of the means of production. With the basis of classes thus wiped away, a classless society will ensue (by definition), and since political power to protect the bourgeoisie against the workers is unnecessary, political authority and the state will wither away.