CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF ARTS

SOCIOLOGY

BLOCK II

Vision

To grow to be a leading centre for human resource development through distance, open and universal learning system.

Mission

To provide quality higher education at door step through barrierless, flexible and open learning mode in conformity with national priority and societal need.

Objective

- **To offer degree, diploma, certificate level programme of study through distance learning in various emerging subjects across the disciplines.**

- **To offer job oriented and vocational programmes in flexible terms in the line of the national and regional level demand of manpower.**

- **To offer various programmes under lifelong learning contributing to the local and regional level requirements and as per the need of the society at large.**

- **To undertake various research and academic activities for furtherance of distance education in the region.**

- **To contribute to conserve and promote cultural heritage, literature, traditional knowledge and environment conducting short programmes, workshops, seminars and research in interdisciplinary field.**

MSO-101:CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL TRADITIONS
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BLOCK II

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This Block comprises of Modules **III-V** of MSO 101: Classical Sociological Thoughts. **Module III** deals with Max Weber. The module is divided into four units. **Unit 6** will introduce the learners to the sociology of Weber. The basic sociological terms and concepts of Weber will be further elaborated in **Unit 7** which will cover social action and rationality. An important contribution of Weber has been in the field of religion and social change. **Unit 8** therefore, discusses Weber's views on the link between religion and the rise of capitalism in the West. It discusses one of the major works of Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* **Unit 9** discusses the methodology of Weber.

Module IV is about Emile Durkheim. Though Auguste Comte, the Father of Sociology, coined the term 'sociology' and was in the forefront in the development of a positive science of society, it was Emile Durkheim who gave an academic base to sociology. The first unit of Module IV, i.e. **Unit 10** gives an overall idea about Durkheim's sociology, while his basic ideas and concepts are further elaborated in the subsequent unit. **Unit 11** therefore, discusses Durkheim's concept of solidarity and division of labour. **Unit 12**, on the other hand, will familiarise the learners with Durkheim's contribution to the methodology of sociology, focusing on his ideas of *social facts*, *normal* and *pathological.*

Module V is devoted to two other social thinkers—Vilfredo Pareto and Georg Simmel. **Unit 13** deals with the major contributions of Pareto to the field of sociology, with logico-experimental method and his theory of elites being the emphasis of the unit. **Unit 14** discusses the sociological ideas of Simmel including his concept of social type.

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MODULE III: MAX WEBER

UNIT 6: THE SOCIOLOGY OF MAX WEBER

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the units of previous Module, you learnt about the ideas and concepts of Karl Marx. In this Unit, you will learn about another German social thinker—Max Weber (1864-1920). Apart from being a sociologist, Weber was a historian, economist, politician as well as a legal scholar. Therefore, it was pertinent that the broad array of knowledge gathered from different fields helped Weber to have a broad perspective on society. Before proceeding with this unit, you need to understand that Weber distinguishes himself from other Enlightenment thinkers, namely Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim. For Marx and Durkheim, the idea of social order is based on the nature of constraint which is located outside the individual. Thus, for Marx, the key issue of class struggle reflects the nature of social relations, whereby historically every society is composed of two antagonistic classes and the project of communism is a creation of a classless society. Similarly, Durkheim's analysis focuses attention on the 'social fact', which is a 'thing' external to the individual whose constraining nature is acutely felt by the latter. The unit of analysis, for

Weber, however is the individual person. Man can understand or can introspect and interpret the conduct of others in terms of motives and intentions.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- Distinguish Weber from other social thinkers;
- Describe the basic ideas and concepts of Weber.

6.3 VERSTEHEN

The two concepts that play a crucial role in constituting the sociology of Weber are 'understanding' and 'interpretation'. Man can understand or can introspect and interpret the conduct of others in terms of motives and intentions. In this regard the studies of the human sciences differ from those of the natural sciences which are engaged in explaining phenomena in terms of universal laws. *Verstehen* is the German word for understanding. The idea of 'interpretation' in Weber's methodology was drawn from hermeneutics or the critical study of the Bible. The task of hermeneutics was to interpret the sacred scriptures. Weber used this idea of interpretation to study human behaviour. The concept of understanding or *verstehen* was also incorporated in his sociology. According to him, understanding was central to the human or moral sciences because the subject matter of the human sciences was man rather than animals or inanimate objects. Understanding is closely related to phenomena that can be simultaneously observed and explained through the lens of a motive. Weberian perspective is often called 'interpretative' or 'understanding' sociology.

According to Weber, there are two types of *verstehen*:

1. Direct Observational Understanding
2. Explanatory Understanding

If someone is angry, you can understand that by observing her/his facial expressions and gestures. Here there is direct observational understanding. Explanatory understanding goes beyond direct observational understanding. If you understand what made the person angry at that time and place, explanatory understanding is achieved. (Adams and Sydie, 2002: 175).

Along with *verstehen*, Weber also laid emphasis on **causality**. Now what is causality? By causality, Weber simply refers to the probability that an event will be accompanied or followed by another event. (Ritzer, 2000: 113). In other words, one phenomenon acts as a cause of another phenomenon which is the effect. However, only one cause need not necessarily lead an effect. There may be multiple causal factors that lead to a phenomenon (effect). Weber therefore, advocated a multi-causal approach. In this context, let us take the example of his famous work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (You will learn in detail about this work Unit 8 of this Module). We know that in it, Weber establishes a relationship between Protestantism and the rise of Capitalism in the West. However, Weber only states Protestantism as one of the causes and not the sole cause for the rise of capitalism in the West. He is of the view that it would be wrong if we considered Protestantism as the only cause for rise of modern capitalism and similarly, it would be wrong if we considered that capitalism could have arisen only because of Protestantism. Other factors could have also led to modern capitalism. Even in the context of causality, it is important to remember the difference between social and natural sciences. *Verstehen* implies that we have a special understanding of the social world which is quite different from what can be applied to the natural world. The meanings attached to the actions of human beings make studying human beings different from studying animals or other inanimate objects. Therefore, it is important to note that the causality that is applicable to the natural sciences is different from the causal knowledge applied in social sciences. The concept of

causality advocated by Weber is "adequate causality". (ibid: 114). Adequate causality emphasizes on probabilistic statements regarding the relationship between social phenomena. So, instead of saying that phenomenon A will lead to phenomenon B, in adequate causality, we say that occurrence of A means that there is a *probability* that B will occur too. The emphasis is more on the degree to which a certain cause favours the occurrence certain effect.

6.4 SOCIAL ACTION

Weber's sociology centres on his concept of social action. Now what does he mean by social action? By social action, he did not mean just any human action. In this context, he distinguished between behaviour and action. Behaviour is simply a response to an external stimulus without the involvement of thought process in it. For instance, you are walking down a dusty road and you sneeze. Now you sneezed probably because dust entered your nostrils that caused irritation. This is something that happened as a response to an external stimulus and it is not a meaningful action. On the other hand, action involves meaning. It is action when an individual attaches subjective meaning to it. (ibid: 121). When the subjective meaning attached to an action is influenced by the behaviour of others which determine its direction, the action becomes social. Weber says that the science of sociology is specifically concerned with the 'interpretative' understanding of social action and the task of sociology is to account for the causes, directions and consequences that such action engenders.

To explain the meaning of social action, Weber says that two cyclists on a path of collision do not constitute social action. But if the cyclists attempt to avoid collision (which may be unavoidable) through manoeuvres and hurling of abuses, then that attempt is a social action since each cyclist takes into account the behaviour of the other. You will learn more about Weber's concept of social action in the next Unit.

6.5 IDEAL TYPES

An important contribution of Max Weber to sociology is his concept ideal type. It is to be noted that the 'ideal' here does not imply standards of perfection that needs to be imitated or emulated rather the ideal type can be identified as a conceptual tool developed by the social thinkers, which has the essential features of some social phenomenon. Another important point to be noted is that the ideal type is not the description of the reality. In fact, in its purest form, the ideal type is just a utopia which cannot be found anywhere in reality. (Adams and Sydie, 2002: 176). However, though the ideal types are not mirror images of the reality, they are to be derived from the real world. The social thinkers should first immerse themselves in the real world and the data from the real world should be used to develop the ideal types. But the ideal types should be exaggerated. Weber is of the view that more the exaggeration, the more useful the ideal type will be. For example, a social thinker should not take the typical existing components of bureaucracy to create the ideal type but s/he should take the most rational form of bureaucracy that can be imagined as the ideal type. This ideal type then should be compared with real bureaucracies and in the process the thinker should identify the causes of deviations from the ideal type. It should also be noted that the ideal types are not constant. With the changes in the society, the ideal types also need to be changed.

According to Hekman (as cited in Ritzer, 2000: 116-117), the ideal types of Weber can be categorised into the following:

1. Historical Ideal Types: These are confined to a particular epoch in history. The modern capitalistic marketplace can be cited as an example here.

2. General Sociological Ideal Types: These are not confined to one particular historical epoch but they cut across several historical periods. An example of such ideal type is bureaucracy.

3. Action Ideal Types: These are types of action such as, affectual action, which depend on the motivations of the actor.

4. Structural Ideal Types: These are based on the causes and consequences of social action. One example is traditional domination.

In this way Weber developed varieties of ideal types, and some of the richness in his work stems from their diversity, although common to them is their mode of construction.

Karlberg (1994) argues that while the heuristic use of ideal types in empirical research is important, it should not be forgotten that they also play a key theoretical role in Weber's work. Although Weber rejects the idea of theoretical laws, he does use ideal types in various ways to create theoretical models. Thus, ideal types constitute the theoretical building blocks for the construction of a variety of theoretical models (for example, the rationalisation of charisma, the rationalisation of society) and these models are then used to analyse specific historical developments.

6.6 CLASS, STATUS AND PARTY

Unlike Marx, Weber did not give a concept of stratification only on the basis of economic aspect rather he gave a concept of stratification on the bases of economic aspect, status and power. Weber's concept of stratification as you can see is more sophisticated than the one given by Marx. In this system of stratification, a person may be in a high rank in one aspect while s/he may be in a lower rank in another aspect.

According to Weber, it is the distribution of power that categorizes people into strata of class, status and party. But class according to him, is not a community rather it is a group of people in the same class

situation which is determined by the market situation. Class is a basis for action by a group. It is determined on the basis of how material property is distributed among the people. Those who own property are in an advantageous position and they often exercise monopoly over market and labour. Those who do not own property have to offer their services in the labour market. In other words, the basic categories of class situation are 'property' and 'lack of property' (Gerth and Mills, 1948: 182).

Weber is of the view that "Class situation" exists when three conditions are met:

"(1) A number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances, insofar as (2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interest in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and (3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour markets." (as cited in Ritzer, 2000: 123)

On the other hand, status refers to communities. Unlike class situation which is determined by the market situation, status situation is determined by lifestyle and honour. While class is related to economic production, status is related to the consumption of goods. (Ritzer, 2000: 123). On the basis of the position of the individual in the status hierarchy, the lifestyle of the individual varies. A person belonging to a particular status group dresses in a particular manner, eats certain food, and lives according to the rules associated with her/his status group. An important point to be noted here is that class and status need not necessarily be related. For instance, ownership of property may lead to higher status but it is not in itself a prerequisite for status.

By now you have understood that class relates to the economic aspect and status to the social aspect. Now let us learn about the third dimension

of Weber's concept of stratification that is party. Party is related to the political aspect. The main goal of the parties is the attainment of power. It may be noted that Weber's concept of party not only covers those that exist in the state but they also include those that exist in social clubs. (Gerth and Mills, 1948: 194). Parties may represent interests of class or status groups or both but they need not necessarily be purely class or status parties and in most cases parties represent partly class and partly status groups but sometimes they represent neither of the two. (ibid: 194). They are well organized and goal oriented.

6.7 POWER AND AUTHORITY

Every social relation is marked by power. Power therefore is crucial to the understanding of social relations. Weber defined power as the "probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests." (Weber, 1925: 53 as cited in Adams and Sydie, 2002: 181). In other words, if you are able to carry out your own will even if another person opposes you, you are said to have power. In order to understand Weber's concept of power and authority, we will have to look at his idea of domination. According to Weber, domination refers to a probability that some or all commands will be obeyed by a particular group of people. Domination can be legitimate or illegitimate. However, Weber was more interested in the legitimate form of domination which he referred to as authority. Weber talks of three types of authority—traditional, charismatic, and rational.

1. Traditional Authority: This type of authority is based on traditions and customs. An example of traditional authority is the authority exercised by the patriarch or male head of a family over other members in patriarchy. In a patriarchal system, the father exercises authority over the other members of the family and his authority is not based on any law but on tradition.

2. Charismatic Authority: This type of authority is based on personal charisma or exceptional qualities or special powers of the leader which can attract devotion of the followers. For example, Jesus Christ, Buddha, or Adolf Hitler possessed charisma which attracted followers that obeyed them.

3. Legal-rational Authority: This type of authority is based on formal rules and laws. In other words, it is exercised by a legally appointed person or leader. According to Weber, the purest type of legal-rational authority is bureaucracy.

An important point to be noted is that Weber's types of authority are ideal types. You have already learnt that the ideal types do not describe the reality and in the case of the three types of authority too, these types do not exist in their pure form in reality. In reality, one type of authority may occur in combination with another type and there may also be modifications and adaptations of these pure types.

Activity:

Think of two examples of each of traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational authority. Also think of an example where you can find a combination of two or all the three types of authority discussed above.

Stop and Read:

According to Weber, bureaucracy, which he considered to be the purest form of legal-rational authority, has the following characteristics:

1. Official functions are bound by rules and are organized on a continuous basis.

2. There is a specified sphere of competence for each office that is each office has the authority to carry out the functions assigned to it and there are also means of compulsion attached to it to get the job done.

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3. There is the principle of hierarchy. The offices are organized in a hierarchical order and each lower office is under the supervision of a higher one.

4. To be fully rational, the offices may require technical qualifications. So, only those people who have specialized technical training are eligible for appointment to those offices.

5. The members of the staff that occupies the offices do not own the means of production. They only can use the things that are needed to do the job.

6. The official position is not appropriated by the incumbent. The position is never owned by the incumbent like a property that can be sold or inherited.

7. All the official works are done based on written documents. Every decision, act, or rule is recorded in writing. (Craib, 1997: 139-140)

6.8 VALUES

Weber made a distinction between values and facts. To achieve objectivity in sociological research, he advocated value-neutrality. This means that Weber is of the view that sociologists should keep in mind that their personal values do not influence their scientific research in any way. For this a sociologist should first be aware of her/his personal values. They need to realize that in the process of adopting a value-neutral approach, they may find results contradictory to their personal views or accepted beliefs. However, Weber was also aware of the fact that it was not possible to completely withdraw values from scientific research. So he was of the view that values are going to play a role in research but a sociologist should completely avoid them during the actual collection of research data. In other words, the influence of values should confine only to the time before the social research begins. (Ritzer, 2000: 118)

Activity:

You know that sociology studies human subjects, so it is often pointed out that sociologists being humans themselves and studying human subjects inevitably leads to some sort of subjectivity. What is your view in this regard? Do you think value-neutrality is possible in sociological research? Substantiate your answer.

6.9 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, you learnt about the contributions of Max Weber to sociology. Weber's ideas centre basically on the understanding and causal explanations of social action and interaction. The sociologists, according to Weber, should therefore scrutinize the meanings and the subsequent consequences of social actions. In other words, for him, the only reality is the individual so analysis in sociological research begins individual rational action. Society, on the other hand, becomes an outcome of the interaction and struggles for power between different groups of individuals. Another important contribution of Weber is the ideal type. The ideal type, however, should not be mistaken to be the standards of perfection but it should be considered as a conceptual tool for the sociologists. You also learnt about Weber's concept of stratification and you have learnt that while Marx's idea of stratification centred only on the economic aspect, Weber's concept of stratification was more complex covering economic aspect, status as well as power.

Glossary:

Legitimate: Something which is accepted by law.

Patriarchy: A system of society where the father or the eldest male member of is the head of the family.

Bureaucracy: A formal organization where there is hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labour, rules and regulations, and impersonality.

Hierarchy: A system of arrangement where members of a society or organization are ranked according to their authority or status.

Incumbent: Occupant or holder of a particular post or office

6.10 QUESTIONS

1. Explain Weber's concept of *verstehen*.

2. Describe Weber's concept of stratification. How does he differ from Marx in his approach?

3. What are the three types of authority given by Weber?

4. What do you mean by value- neutrality?

5. Write a note on Weber's ideal types.

6.11 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

Adams, B.N. and Sydie R.A. (2002). *Classical Sociological Theory*. Pine Forge Press, An imprint of Sage Publications, Inc., California.

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UNIT 7: BASIC SOCIOLOGICAL TERMS AND CONCEPTS: SOCIAL ACTION, RATIONALITY, CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL ACTION

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last Unit, you got introduced to sociology of Max Weber. In this Unit, we will move a step further and learn about the basic sociological terms and concepts of Weber. It is to be noted that Weber was influenced by his contemporary, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who in turn made the distinction between the natural and human sciences. You know that Comte and Spencer were positivists who gave causal mechanisms of the linear unfolding of various stages of society. Dilthey, however, was opposed to this concept. According to Dilthey, there were two kinds of sciences--- *naturwissenschaft* or sciences of nature and *geisteswissenschaft* or the sciences of human spirit. The science of nature explained phenomena in terms of cause and effect. On the other hand, *geisteswissenschaft* or the sciences of human spirit, which included history, law, literary criticism etc., were no doubt scientific but distinct from the natural sciences. They were concerned not with establishing the

validity of facts.

Hence the Weberian perspective is often called 'interpretative' or 'understanding' sociology. In this approach unlike causal explanations of the kind provided by Comte and Spencer, interpretative sociology relates the part to the whole by 'assimilating the singularity of an object into a spiritualized whole' (Gerth and Mills 1948: 57). Weber says that the science of sociology is specifically concerned with the 'interpretative' understanding of social action and the task of sociology is to account for the causes, directions and consequences that such action engenders.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of social action as given by Weber;
- Differentiate between the different categories of social action as given by Weber;
- Explain Weber's concept of rationality and its types.

7.3 SOCIAL ACTION

In the previous Unit, you got introduced to Weber's concept of social action and you have learnt that only a meaningful human action directed towards others forms a social action. You have also learnt that in the context of social action, Weber has distinguished between behaviour and action. Behaviour is something that is done without attaching meaning to it whereas action is meaningful; an individual attaches subjective meaning to it. Therefore, to understand the meaning of social action as given by Weber in a simple manner, let us look at the following points:

- Action is different from behaviour
- Behaviour is simply a response to an external stimulus and

therefore no meaning is attached to it

- Action is meaningful and has subjective meaning attached to it
- Not all actions are 'social actions'
- Actions that take into consideration other people or are influenced by the behaviour of others are social actions

In the previous Unit, you also learnt about the example of two cyclists given by Weber to explain the meaning of social action. In this particular example, you have seen that the act of collision is not something intended by the cyclists. This act is an event in the natural world which is a result of a physical event. Therefore, the act of collision is not a social action. On the other hand, the attempts on the part of the cyclists to avoid the collision through manoeuvres and hurling of abuses or the argument or apology that follows after the collision, are social actions in the sense that each cyclist is deliberately directing her/his action towards the other. In other words, to be a social action, an action has to done consciously or deliberately by an individual directed towards or in relation to others. Let us take another example here. Suppose you have a habit of meditating in the morning and praying at bedtime. Are these actions social actions? Well, the answer is no. Why? This is because these actions are solitary in nature and do not orient themselves to the behaviour of others. Similarly, mere imitation or crowd behaviour cannot be categorized as social action since these activities may not make any meaningful sense to the actors.

Social action could include not only present but also past and future orientation to the behaviour of others. The 'others' here could be specific individuals known to the actor or unspecified plurality unknown as individuals. Social action also includes "failure to act" and "passive acquiescence" (Weber, 1925: 22, as cited in Adams and Sydie, 2002: 177).

Stop and Read

Every social theorist inevitably deals with human action. Therefore, Marx, Durkheim and Weber, all have dealt with human action. Now how is Weber different from Marx and Durkheim in this context? The ideas of Marx centre on the economic aspect. Even in context of human actions, he is of the view that these are conditioned by the economic forces about which the actors are not aware or they do not understand and therefore, they cannot attach a subjective meaning to them. On the other hand, according to Durkheim, the meaning that we attach to an action itself is social since we are socialised into ways of thinking. According to his concept of collective consciousness, members of a society have common or shared ideas, beliefs and knowledge which influence their ways of thinking even while attaching meanings to their actions. (Craib, 1997: 46)

7.3.1 Types of Social Action

The concept of social action is so crucial to Weber that for him, entire sociology centres on "understanding the meaning, causes, and consequences of social action" (Adams and Sydie, 2002: 177). Weber distinguishes between four types of social action—instrumental rational action, value-rational action, affectual action, and traditional action. Before proceeding further, please note that these types are based on

Weber's concept "ideal type" that we have discussed in the previous Unit. So in reality, it may be unusual to find the types of social action in their pure forms rather we are likely to come across social actions that have some combination of all the four types of social action. (Ritzer, 2000: 122).

1. Instrumental Rational Action

Instrumental rational action is 'determined by expectations as to the behaviour of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as "conditions" or "means" for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends' (Weber 1968: 24). Here as you can see two terms are significant—"means" and "ends". The actor has a particular end or goal to be achieved and in order to do so there are certain means or ways. However, the end should be realistic. The actor rationally chooses the efficient means to achieve the end taking also into consideration the secondary results. It is to be noted that, the end, means and the secondary results are all considered rationally.

2. Value-Rational Action

Value-rational action is 'determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other forms of behaviour, independently of its prospects of success' (ibid: 24-5). In this type of action, the ends and means are determined values. Unlike instrumental rational action, this action is not based on scientific or objective knowledge. Then why is it referred to as 'rational'? This is because here the rationality is justified on the grounds of the actor's beliefs and values.

3. Affectual Action

Affectual or emotional action is 'determined by the actor's specific effects and feeling states' (ibid: 25). In other words, this type of action is determined by the actor's emotions. It is to be noted that affectual action lies on the borderline of behaviour and therefore at times, if it gets

uncontrollable, it may cross the line to be labelled as behaviour and not a social action. For instance, you have probably seen that some people try to relieve their anger by screaming out loud (some even cover their mouths with pillows). Now this is not a social action. However, if a person is angry with someone and s/he yells at that person to intimidate her/him, then that is an affectual social action.

4. Traditional Action

Traditional social action is behaviour 'determined by ingrained habituations' (ibid: 25). This type of social action is determined by customs and traditions. Like affectual action, it also lies on the borderline of behaviour because in most cases, it is so repeatedly followed that it almost becomes reaction to habitual stimuli. For instance, most everyday actions almost become a habit and we are so internalised to them that we do them in ways that have always been followed.

According to Weber, the four types of social action are not mutually exclusive categories. As we have already stated earlier, these four types are based on his concept of ideal type and therefore we may see combinations of all the four categories. For example, an instrumental rational social action can have a value rational component especially in the case of conflicting choices that one has to make. Again, value rational social action can have instrumental rational action with respect to the means of achieving the purpose even though the ends are determined by absolute values. The more absolute the value, the less consideration would be given to the consequences.

It is to be noted the various types of action can be graded operationally in terms of a scale of rationality and irrationality. At the top of the scale are activities which are rationally advantageous. In other words, instrumental-rational action is at the top. Further down the scale are value-rational, affectual and traditional social actions, which are a result of absolute ends, sentiments or habits. The more absolute the values, the lesser would be the consideration of the consequences of such action and

such activities would be correspondingly deemed irrational (ibid: 57). Thus, we see that Weber's concept of social action is related to his concept of rationality. Since Weber was more interested in rationality, instrumental-rational and value-rational social actions were of greatest interest to him. In the next section, we are going to discuss Weber's concept of rationality.

Activity

List 5 activities from your everyday life and classify them into the 4 types of social action as proposed by Weber.

7.4 RATIONALITY

Rationality forms an important theme in almost all of Weber's writings. You probably have some idea as to what rationality means but here you need to focus on the concept of rationality as seen in the works of Weber. Before proceeding further, you need to understand that Weber's concept of rationality is little different from his concept of rationalization. Rationalization is broader term than rationality and it refers to the overall historical process of making life more efficient and predictable. Rationality, on the other hand, basically confines to social action. From the types of social action discussed above, we have understood that Weber has mentioned about instrumental or means-ends rationality and value rationality. However, these types as you can see, basically deal with the types of social action and these are not adequate to describe the broad concept of rationalization of Weber. Another point to be noted here is that it is not easy to give an exact and clear definition of rationalization as reflected in the works of Weber. Why? This is because Weber did not stick to just one definition of the term and in fact, many a time he did not even mention which definition he was using in a particular discussion. The most important aspect that Weber described in terms of rationalization was the rise of capitalism of the West. Capitalism had

existed in some form or the other in various periods in history but the capitalism that rose in the West was the most rational form of capitalism which Weber considered as the "most fateful force in our modern life" (Adams and Sydie, 2002: 173).

From the section on social action you have already understood that behaviour is just a response to an external stimulus and there is no meaning attached to it. While talking about rationality, Weber distinguishes between rational and non-rational. Behaviour, according to him, is guided by an individual's habits. Here, the individual is not conscious of her/his acts and therefore, behaviour is non-rational. On the other hand, a rational action is something that an individual performs deliberately and is aware of her/his doing of the act (Brubaker 1984:50).

7.4.1 Types of Rationality

To understand Weber's concept of rationality, you need to look at the types of rationality. According Weber, there are four distinct types of rationality—practical, theoretical, formal and substantive. (Weber 1968: 24-25).

1. Practical Rationality: In the section on the types of social action you have learnt that there is an end or goal to be achieved by the learner and there are several means for that from which the actor has to choose from. If the actor systematically decides the best means to achieve the desired end based on practicality, s/he is said to be exercising practical rationality. In this type of rationality all the impractical values such as religious values or theoretical rationality of the intellectuals are avoided.

2. Theoretical Rationality: This type of rationality involves the use abstract ideas and not action to understand the reality. Here, there is use of induction, deduction, causality, etc. Scientists and philosophers are seen to use this type rationality. The concern of the actor in this rationality is not merely confined to the daily realities rather the entire world is sought to be understood as a meaningful cosmos.

3. Substantive Rationality: In this type of rationality, the actor decides the best means to achieve the desired end guided by her/his system of values. Substantive rationality directly influences action through values. It may also be noted that one system of values may be more rational than another.

4. Formal Rationality: In this type of rationality the actor chooses the most efficient means to the end based on formally accepted rules and laws. This is different from practical rationality in the sense that while in practical rationality, it is the personal interests that guide the actor in choosing the most practical means, in formal rationality only the universally accepted norms are taken into consideration. Personal ties or sentiments are avoided in formal rationality.

It is to be noted here that the first three types of rationality—practical, theoretical, and substantive existed throughout history in different parts of the world. In other words, these three types are trans-civilizational and trans-historical. On the other hand, the fourth type—formal rationality arose only in the West owing to the rise of industrialization and the subsequent developments following it. Because of the changes after industrialization in the West, there emerged some universally applied laws and rules in the various spheres—economic, legal, scientific institutions as well as in bureaucratic institutions which paved way for the rise of formal rationality. In the context of the rise of modern capitalism in the West, it is pointed out that substantive rationality in the form of Calvinism replaced practical rationality and led to the rise of formal rationality. (Ritzer, 2000: 132-134).

7.5 SUMMING UP

From this Unit, you learnt about Weber's concept of social action and the various types of it as given by Weber. You have seen that his concept of 'ideal types' is central to Weber's concepts, the reflection of which is seen in terms of social action too. The different types of social action are based on 'ideal types' and therefore it is not likely to find them in their

pure forms. What we may encounter is a mixture of such types. Weber argues that, sociology is concerned with social action and every social action has an ideal. This 'ideal type' of social action is in our mind in the world of ideas. According to Weber, the Science of sociology could be developed only based on the concept, 'Ideal type'. Nevertheless, we can observe all kinds of social phenomena that come close to these types that Weber has constructed. Weber has convinced that the first type of social action, i.e. instrumental-rational action is gaining territory in modernity. Social action in modern western societies can be characterised as goal rational and a gradual marginalisation of traditional, affectual and value oriented social action can be witnessed. Of course, these types are present but in the periphery. Meanwhile, the core of Weber's sociological theory of modernity comes down to the fact that, in modern western societies the realm rational action is constantly increasing at the expense of the realms of the other three types of social action. All the aspects of modernity are nothing but the consequences of this central development.

Glossary:
1. Acquiescence: The reluctant acceptance of something without protest
2. Socialise: In sociology, to socialise means to learn the habits, social norms, and attitudes to become a functioning member of the group.
3. Collective consciousness: A concept developed by Emile Durkheim to refer to the set of shared beliefs, ideas and attitudes within a group or society.
4. Affectual: Relating to feelings or emotions.
5. Induction: A method of reasoning which arrives at a general principle from specific observations.
6. Deduction: A method of reasoning which arrives at a specific conclusion from general statements.
7. Causality: The concept that states that one thing or phenomenon (cause) under certain conditions, causes or leads to another thing or phenomenon (effect)

8. Cosmos: The entire universe seen as a well-ordered whole.

7.6 QUESTIONS

1. Define Social Action. Explain the different types of Social Action.
2. What is the difference between human behaviour and action as given by Weber?
3. Explain the concept of rationality with its types as given by Weber.
4. How is practical rationality different from theoretical rationality?
5. Why does Weber say that affectual action lies on the borderline of behaviour?

7.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 8: RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Objectives

8.3 Religion and Capitalism

8.4 The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

    8.4.1 What is the characteristic of capitalism?

    8.4.2 Predestination and Calling

8.5 Summing Up

8.6 Questions

8.7 Recommended Readings and References

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last Unit, we discussed about the basic sociological concepts of Weber focusing on rationality and social action. This Unit will deal with his views in the context of religion. As we have already learnt that one of the major works of Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* explains the rise of modern capitalism in the West and here Weber identifies a link between religion and modern capitalism, in this Unit, therefore, we are basically going to discuss *The Protestant Ethic*. Weber extended the use of the comparative method to study types of capitalism as a cultural constellation and identify elements in common. He used ideal types to prepare the 'descriptive materials of world history for comparative analyses as in his example of world religions' (Gerth and Mills 1948: 60).

8.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit, you are expected to:

- Explain Weber's views on religion and its connection to the rise of modern capitalism;

- Explain Weber's Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

8.3 RELIGION AND CAPITALISM

Though critical of the unilinear evolutionary irreversible unfolding of progressive stages that every society undergoes, Weber was nevertheless concerned with understanding society as subject to lawful regularities, which entailed the choice of a comparative framework. This is best reflected in his analysis of the relationship between religion and capitalism as developed in the West and its consequent unfolding in other civilizations. He contends that capitalism of some kind was evident in the Orient but it did not develop the way it did in the West. The issue for him was what factors in the eastern civilization was responsible for the lack of emergence of modern western capitalism.

By engaging in a comparative analysis of causal sequences, Weber tried to find not only the 'necessary' but also the 'sufficient' conditions for the emergence of western capitalism (ibid: 61). Accordingly, it is only in the Occident that the peculiar feature of inner worldly asceticism characteristic of Protestantism enabled the development of a specific personality type that constituted the sufficient condition for the emergence of capitalism and it is to this issue that we will turn our attention to.

8.4 THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism was the culmination of a series of essays that Weber wrote in 1904-05. Weber was keen to examine the role played by religion, namely Protestant Christianity, in economic behaviour. The Protestant religions of Western Europe and the Puritan ideals that they espoused emerged from the Reformation which distinguished modern capitalism from its counterparts elsewhere in the world.

STOP AND READ

Reformation: A series of movements that began in the 16th century, aimed towards reforming the Christian Church in the West. It marked one of the greatest crises in Western Christianity. The protests included criticism of the Roman pope and the priest, representatives of orthodox religion of Catholicism. The original protestors in due course acquired a following and hence were called Protestants. They were internally divided into many factions. The Protestants wanted to do away with the role of the clergy which had become corrupt and in its place sought a personal relationship with God, a new faith based on the textual reading of the Bible. Some of the notable Protestants of the period were Martin Luther King (1483-1546), John Calvin (1509-64) and Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531). On the whole the Protestant creed was marked by individual acceptance of faith which was reflected in family life and prayers, hard work as the sole virtue in everyday affairs of the world and austerity and simplicity in ways of being.

Weber classified various occupational groups using the criterion of religious domination and found that: '…business leaders and owners of capital, as well as the higher grades of skilled labour, and even more the technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprises, are overwhelmingly Protestant' (Weber 1992: 3). Even within his own family, Weber observed that his uncle Karl David Weber, a Protestant, who founded his own domestic enterprise, displayed a combination of 'individualism' and an 'ethic of economic conduct' (Bendix 1977: 51). His uncle's conduct was marked by hard work, frugal living and reserved manners, characteristics that were found in other prominent entrepreneurs of the age.

Consequently, Weber's aim was to determine to what extent religious forces have taken part in the qualitative formation and the quantitative expansion of that spirit over the world.

According to him, Protestants, be they a dominant class or a subordinated group have quite often demonstrated a capacity to develop 'economic rationalism'; and the reason for this characteristic is to be found in the 'permanent intrinsic character of their religious beliefs and not merely in the socio-political milieu that surrounds them' (Weber 1992: 7).

Weber opposed the tenets of economic rationalism to economic traditionalism which characterized pre-capitalist societies to show how modern capitalism and its rationalistic enterprise differed from it. According to him economic traditionalism was evident when workers refuse to work more even when offered incentives of being paid higher wages. For example, merely raising the piece rate of work, did not induce workers to earn more. Instead inexplicably they worked less. Weber says that:

'a man by nature does not want to earn more money but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and warn as much as necessary for the purpose…' (ibid: 18).

Workers engaged in economic traditionalism seek maximum comfort during working house and are often not interested in adapting themselves to newer and efficient methods of work. Economic traditionalism is also present in the case of entrepreneurs who deal in goods of varied rather than standardized quality. They are satisfied with income that ensures them a comfortable living. Moreover, their relationship with customers and competitors are based on personal ties. A person with a rationalist outlook will end up characterizing human behaviour based on economic traditionalism as a sign of laziness (Bendix 1977: 52).

Thus, this trait of pre-capitalist labour inhibits the productivity of human labour which is manifested in the absence of an instinct to acquire. Weber says that 'Labour in the service of a rational organization for the provision of humanity with material goods has without doubt always appeared to the representatives of the capitalistic spirit as one of the most important purposes of their life work' (Weber 1992: 36).

This aspect to devotion to labour is an example of rational thought. The individualistic oriented capitalist economy of the West is therefore 'rationalised based on rigorous calculations directed with foresight and caution towards economic success' (ibid: 37). This aspect is sharply distinguished from the hand to mouth existence of the peasant and the principled traditionalism of the guild craftsmen of the medieval period, both precursors to the emergence of economic rationalism.

Weber identifies another aspect of economic traditionalism, namely greed and unscrupulous acquisitive drive which he says are worldwide phenomena that needs to be distinguished from the 'spirit' of modern capitalism. He says that enterprises that generate windfall gains based on adventure such as piracy, financing of wars etc. are activities devoid of ethical component. They are often in conflict with the moral norms of the local community. Thus, neither avarice, nor a lax moral code nor the simple adherence to economic traditionalism is in keeping with the idea of hard work as a virtue which in turn imposes a moral obligation on the individuals (Bendix 1977:55).

8.4.1 What is the characteristic of capitalism?

Weber says that capitalistic activity is characterized by the relentless pursuit of profit; it is an activity whereby accumulation becomes as an end in itself. He believes that this characteristic was peculiar to 17th century north Western Europe, where capitalists reinvested earnings rather than enjoying them in a conspicuous consumption. Capitalism was linked with disciplined, rule following methodical conduct. The qualities

that were essential to the development of the spirit of capitalism were prudence, diligence, frugality and credit-worthiness.

The spirit of capitalism as characterized in ideas advocating economic gain based on rational activities was not unique to the West if one considered it merely an attribute of individuals. Weber says that individual economic entrepreneurs did not set up the new economic order. Thus, a lifestyle governed by the peculiarities of capitalism which would come to dominate all aspects of life as universal characteristics had to originate somewhere and not just in isolated individuals.

It is precisely in examining this issue Weber turns his attention to the affinity between Protestantism and the 'spirit of capitalism'. According to him this affinity could be just an example of adaptation to socio-economic changes of the 16th century, whereby the wealthiest regions and cities of Europe could have become Protestant because the latter facilitated pursuit of economic gain. Bendix (1977) says that the common prevailing idea was that the relationship between modern capitalism and religious feelings were incompatible and therefore generated a paradox for Weber. The universal experience was that religious devotion was accompanied by a rejection of interest in daily affairs, and often men who were pursuing economic gains were indifferent towards religion (Bendix 1977: 57).

According to Weber the chances of overcoming the habits of economic traditionalism are best ensured through one's religious upbringing, especially in the case of Protestantism where one is obligated to one's job.

The notion of hard work as a duty that has its own rewards and merits is a distinguishing feature of modern industrial man. A man should devote himself to his work not merely because he has to but because it is a sign of virtue. It constitutes: 'an obligation which the individual is supposed

to feel and does feel towards the content of his occupational activity, no matter in what it consists' (ibid: 51). Accordingly, hard work as a duty represents the maxim of the 'spirit of capitalism' because it was originally characterized by religious significance though subsequently it was 'devoid of all concerns of a higher transcendental purpose' (ibid: 51).

In this period of Reformation, the rise of the middle classes was marked by the absence of mere acquisitiveness, absolute hedonism and religious indifference which are characteristics of social groups that are engaged in economic activities.

In writing *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber tried to find an explanation to this paradox and demonstrate that certain sects of Protestants actually spurred the pursuit of economic gain. During the Reformation, worldly activities or everyday conduct of affairs were found to have a moral meaning or positive spiritual connotations, which made Weber examine the theological doctrines of the period.

8.4.2 Predestination and Calling

None of the reformers had any agenda in promoting the spirit of capitalism, but Weber argues that their religious teachings had implicit that ideas led to the secularization of religious attitudes and contributed to new worldly orientations. He chose to examine the works of Calvin and Luther, two of the most prominent preachers of the Reformation.

Weber was interested in the Calvinist doctrine of the Puritan movements in which the ideas of predestination was initially developed by John Calvin during the Reformation. In the idea of predestination, an individual's fate of being saved was already pre-decided by God at the time of creation. An individual who had been granted God's grace could not lose it in the course of his life. Similarly, an individual who was not chosen to be saved by God could not do anything to earn the latter's

grace. Thus, the concept of grace was the result of an absolute divine power which was independent of man's achievements. One could not question God's arbitrariness which reflected a lack of faith. The only consolation that humans had was that some were elected as chosen to be saved whereas others were damned.

The religious anxiety was characterized by an inner loneliness which eventually resulted in a 'this worldly asceticism' reflected in the mundane affairs of worldly activities. God was beyond comprehension and man stood alone before him. The Church was of no great help because it included both the doomed and the saved who would be forced to obey God's commands with no hope of salvation. The priest was rendered ineffectual because only the elect could understand the work of God in their own hearts (Bendix 1977: 59).

The believer had to have faith that he was one among the chosen few who would receive salvation through God's grace and work hard in one's daily activities. Doubt or lack of certainty was a sign of lack of faith on the part of the individual. In order to overcome doubt, the individual had to demonstrate success in worldly affairs which was a possible sign of being chosen by God. In this regard, the moral obligation on the individual to pursue his duty in worldly affairs of the everyday was very different from that prescribed by other world religions such as Hinduism and Catholicism where the meaning of religiosity meant that one had to transcend the everyday worldly life by practicing austerity achieved through a monastic lifestyle.

Calvinism advocated that one must find solace solely on the basis of the true faith. To attain the self-confidence, unceasing work in what Martin Luther would label as 'calling' was recommended. The concept of the calling was a 'central dogma' of Protestantism, which Luther developed from the authority of the Bible (ibid: 60).

Weber says:

"*The only way of living acceptably to God was not to surpass worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfilment of the obligations imposed upon individuals by his position in the whole world. That was his calling*". (Weber 1992: 40).

Weber says that for Luther, labour in calling appeared as an outward expression of brotherly love. In this endless activity in the service of God, the believer was able to fortify his self-confidence which functioned as a sign of the divine will.

By this unceasing activity in the service of God, the believer was able to strengthen his self-confidence which served as the active tool of the divine will. Thus:

"*Calvinism had eliminated all magical means of attaining salvation. In the absence of such options, the believer could not hope to attain salvation through penance or atonement*"(Bendix: 1977: 60).

In this state of being, the moral conduct of the average man was to be governed by attention to his conduct. Weber says:

…There was no place for the very human Catholic cycle of sin, repentance, atonement, release, followed by renewed sin…The moral conduct of the average man was thus deprived of its planless and unsystematic character…Only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature. It was this rationalisation which gave the Reformed faith its peculiar ascetic tendency (Weber 1992 71).

This peculiar ascetic tendency demonstrated the affinity between Calvinism and the spirit of capitalism, that is rigorous planning and absolute self-denial led to accruing of economic gain. Hence a 'this-worldly Protestant asceticism' meant eschewing immediate gratification which had the unintended consequence of accumulation of capital that could be further invested (ibid: 115).

But the ethic of Protestantism was categorical of its denouncement of idleness and ostentatious display of luxury. Thus, wealth accumulation was frowned upon since it led to sloth and self-indulgence which were to be condemned. Luxuries were supposedly temptations that would induce laziness and distract the believer from the path of industrious calling. That is profit and loss was ethically bad if they encouraged laziness and dissipation. Bendix says that for Weber "*The full force of the Puritan piety was enlisted in the attempt to safeguard the encouragement of worldly activities against the greater dangers to the soul arising from concern with mundane affairs.*" (Bendix 1977: 62-3). Hence music, theatre, etc. were seen as indulgences that were aimless pursuits that were in the service of pleasure and not God.

Puritanism underwent a process of secularization through the process of planning and self-control in the course of which 'utilitarian industriousness replaced the search for the kingdom of God and created a specifically bourgeois economic ethos (ibid: 66). From religious doctrine it became a way of life for groups of men. This was achieved through the pressure enforced on believers by volunteer groups. Enforcement of church discipline was done through peers who ensured that individuals followed a life of austerity and calling. Members of the various groups had to demonstrate that they possessed these qualities. Thus, the social organization of the sects had provided the means by which the ethical teachings of Puritan religiosity had become inculcated in a methodical lifestyle' (Bendix 1977: 65)

8.5 SUMMING UP

Thus, the spirit of capitalism was the consequence of certain effects of Reformation or more precisely Capitalism as an economic system is a creation of the Reformation. It is pertinent to note that the Protestant ethic is not the sole factor that connects religious belief to modern capitalism, thereby marking the distinction between the Western and the Eastern civilizations.

Anthony Giddens (1992) in his introduction to the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, has pointed to several other features in Western society which contributed to the development of modern capitalism.

First, the decline of kinship ties as basis of economic cooperation and the separation of production from the household economy, which preceded the development of capitalism in the West. The second factor was the growth and development of the medieval city in Europe. This led to the emergence of urban communities with some form of political autonomy. Comparably in India and China, the rural-urban distinction was based on kin networks. Third, in Europe the juridical framework of Roman law was a rational enterprise that did not develop elsewhere. The notion of law was important in that it led to the subsequent development of the nation state and a modern bureaucracy. Finally, the emergence of double entry book keeping as a rational accounting mechanism in Europe was central to the development of modern capitalism. All the above-mentioned factors when combined with the 'moral energy' of the Puritans led to the rise of capitalism (Giddens 1992: xvii).

Thus, modern capitalism was a complex that was distinguished by a number of interrelated components. It involved investments of capital in economic ventures that were rationally calculated. Moreover, it envisaged a voluntary supply of labour which incorporated a planned division of labour within the business enterprise. All these activities were governed through the operation of a market-based economy. The business corporation was a legal entity. The trade of commodities was enabled through organised exchanges. It is precisely this 'spirit of capitalism' that becomes the object of inquiry for Weber in The Protestant Ethic.

Accordingly, the *Protestant Ethic* became the benchmark by which other religions could be judged as examples of alternative modes of rationalization. For example, in China, Confucianism did not promote ascetic values. Calvinism spurred an activist zeal on the part of the

believer's attitude to daily affairs and a need to inculcate virtue in the eyes of God through hard work, frugality, and temperance in behaviour and conduct. In the wake of the secularization of the Protestant ideals, Weber felt that religion has no future and the subsequent process of rationalization would lead to the decline of religion in a secular, scientific consumer world where there is the 'iron cage of bureaucracy'.

Activity

What are the factors in Hinduism that inhibit the conditions for the rise of modern capitalism, as it happened in the West?

8.6 QUESTIONS

1. Describe the concepts of Predestination and Calling as stated in 'The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism.'

2. Explain the influence of Calvinist Doctrine on Weber.

3. "Anthony Giddens (1992) in his introduction to the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, has pointed to a number of other features in Western society which contributed to the development of modern capitalism." Describe the features of Protestantism.

4. Explain the concept of Puritanism with suitable examples.

8.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 9: CONTRIBUTION TO THE METHODOLOGY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit, you got introduced to Weber's concept of religion and social change. You have also learnt the significant role played by religion in society. Max Weber, as you have already learnt laid great emphasis on social action. In other words, according to him, sociology may be defined as a comprehensive science of social action. (Lewis A. Coser, 2007: 217). Weber like all the other founding fathers of sociology has made tremendous and unbeatable contribution to almost all the branches of sociology. He is regarded till now as the greatest sociologist only because of his original perspectives and theories. He has a huge

number of contributions not only to Sociology but also to History, Economics, Political Science, Religion, Philosophy, and Art etc. Social action is reciprocally oriented action which is intentional, meaningful and symbolic which is known as interaction in contemporary sociology. He was mainly concerned with the subjective meaning of action or the meaning actors give to their own action.

9.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- explain Weber's methodological concerns, social theory and method;
- examine the relationship between causality and probability;
- differentiate between value-neutrality and value-relevance in social sciences;
- describe the role of objectivity in social sciences.

9.3 WEBER'S METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

9.3.1 Sociological Theory

A theory is couched in terms of well-defined concepts and logically inter-connected propositions. Theory building is a creative achievement and involves a qualitative jump beyond evidence. It is verifiable in a preliminary way, consistent with the body of known facts and available supporting evidences. It is also provisional in character which is always open to revision depending on new insights and evidences. A theory is also a systematized formulation that seeks to reconcile the needs of a humanistic tradition (speculative, creative, etc.) with the demands of a scientific tradition (measurement, rigorous, induction, predictive power etc.)

Based on the radius of their explanatory shell, theories can be classified into macro or micro theory. The macro sociological theories examine the wider social structures interdependent social institutions, global and historical processes of social life whereas the micro sociological theories are more concerned with action, interaction and the construction of meaning. Therefore, the theories such as symbolic interactionism, exchange theory and ethnomethodology are regarded as micro sociological theories, whilst Marxism, functionalism and systems theory are regarded as macro sociological. (G. Marshall, 2007: 379)

9.3.2 Methodology

What is methodology? While doing an empirical research, the methods and the general approach that are used are sometimes referred to as methodology even though the term 'research techniques' is more apt in this context. The principal concerns of methodology are wider philosophy of science in social science and the study of how sociologists and others conduct investigations and assess evidences, how they decide what is true and false. (G. Marshall, 2007: 412)

The methodology in sociology can be divided into two important groups:

1.   Qualitative Research: In this type of research, the emphasis is on interpretation. The collection and analysis of data are based on understanding, with an emphasis on meanings.

2.   Quantitative Research: This type of research is based on the collection and analysis of numerical data. (G. Marshall, 2007: 543)

9.3.3 Sociological Method of Weber

Before looking at Weber's methodology, let us quickly look at the methodological traditions of his predecessors:

  i.   Idealism of Hegel: This method stated that mind is rational and human beings using this rational mind get engaged in various kinds of innovations, inventions and discoveries in order to create
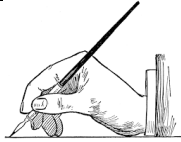
and recreate human history. This method is also known as rational method.

ii. Positivism of Auguste Comte: It advocated that the knowledge of social reality can only be perceived by the help of experimentation, observation and one's own personal experience and not by using the rational mind.

iii. Comparative method used by Emile Durkheim: This method of Durkheim was used to study the change from mechanical to organic solidarity. He used the repressive and restitutive laws as the basis of social solidarity. Durkheim also used this method to study Suicide in different areas of France and compared it with the suicide rates of other European countries. He claimed that suicide rates very systematically with the rates of other social phenomenon such as religious beliefs, marital status, military training and urban or rural life style.

iv. Dialectical Materialistic method of Karl Marx: This method specifies that the opposite forces which are always present constitute the moving forces. The term 'dialectic' means discussion. (Sociology Guide.Com, 2018)

Now moving on to Weber's methodology, it may be noted that he was greatly interested in history and this was reflected in his approach towards sociology too. Despite the differences between the two disciplines, Weber sought to combine history and sociology. As such, he is often referred to as historical sociologist. Weber was also of the view that the sociologists have an edge over natural scientists in the sense that they are capable of "understanding" a social phenomenon. The German word for understanding is *verstehen* and this term began to occupy a central place in Weber's methodology. His concept of *verstehen* was something that was commonly used by the German historians of his day and it was derived from a field known as *hermeneutics* which was an approach to understand published texts. Hermeneutics not only focused

on the interpretation of the content of the texts, rather it tried to interpret the thinking of the writers as well. Weber applied the same concept to the understanding of actors and their interaction. Another important aspect of Weber's methodology is the concept of causality--another concept that was popular within the domain of history. In simple words, Weber's concept of causality may be defined as the probability that one event will be followed or accompanied by another event. Other important aspects of his methodology include the *ideal types* and value neutrality which we will discuss in the subsequent sections.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1.   Define the term methodology.

----

2. What is theory?

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3. Name the two categories in which the methodology of sociology can be divided.

9.3.3.1 The Ideal Types

The concept of 'ideal types' is known as 'typological analysis' in methodology of Weber. He says that, 'The idea behind the concept of ideal type is that social phenomena in virtue of their manifold and fluid nature can be analysed solely in terms of the extreme forms of their

characteristics, which can never be observed in their purity.' (Ian Robertson)

Sociologists use ideal types as 'a measuring rods or as means to find out similarities and differences in the actual phenomena.'

The ideal type is a method for comparative study. He used the concept as an abstract model, and a standard of comparisons which enables us to see the picture of real world in a clearer and systematic way. (C.N. Shankar Rao, 2006: 712)

9.3.3.1.1 Characteristics of 'Ideal Types'

1. Ideal Types are mental constructs ideal in a logical sense which depends on our capacity of imagination.

2. Vast differences are found between ideal types and actual life situations as they are far from the real world.

3. They are not actualities and remain as our mental constructs and they serve as theoretical tools to understand reality.

4. Ideal types cannot be considered as instruments to indicate statistical average.

5. They are 'pure types' and abstract that have no connection at all with value judgements and nothing to do with any type of perfection.

6. They are not hypotheses and so the question of proving or disproving it does not arise.

7. They are one-sided model, is purely selective.

8. Ideal types do not provide complete description of a social phenomenon.

9. They are not rigid or fixed rather they are flexible and subject to change. (Rao, 2006)
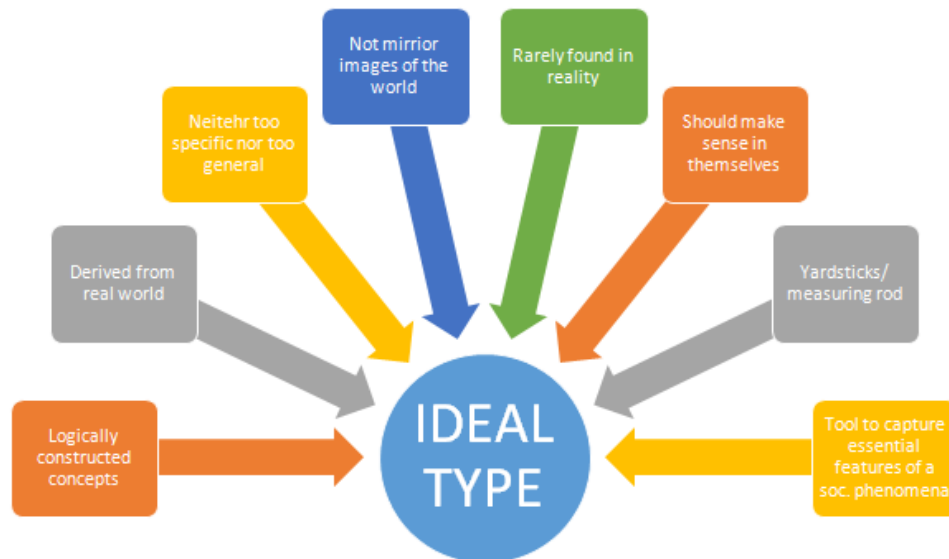
Fig: Ideal Types of Weber

Source: www.chromeias.com

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Define the concept of ideal types as given by Weber

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2. Sociologists use ideal types as _____or as means to find out similarities and differences in the actual phenomena.

3. State whether true or false:

    Ideal types give a real image of actual life_____.

9.3.3.2 'Verstehen' or Interpretative Understanding

Verstehen is a German word meaning to know and understand the importance of a phenomenon. Weber used this term to refer to the understanding of the significance and meaning of human action. He also states that unlike a natural scientist who observes any phenomenon as external, a social scientist tries to understand a social phenomenon from an insider's point of view.

9.3.3.3 Causality and Probability

Weber expressed causality in terms of probability. He had firm believe on the twin factors i.e. historical as well as sociological causality. He moreover, also argued that it is possible to predict human action. According to him, it is only in case of an insane that human action becomes unpredictable. That is why we associate highest empirical feeling of freedom to those actions which we perform rationally and consciously. Weber's opinion on probability is not based on some kind of free will but derives from his recognition of the extreme difficulties in making exhaustive imputations. To Weber, one can at best follow the causal chains that have helped to determine the object under study. Weber made a distinction between historical causality and sociological causality. According to him, historical causality deals with the unique circumstances that have given rise to an event whereas sociological causality establishes regular relationship between two phenomena. He has used probability to mean that men's behaviour in certain contexts is oriented towards normative expectations. This will always remain probable and not certain because for some actors the chains of causality peculiar to their social relationships will lead to departure from the expected probability. He stated that causal connections establish the relationship between ideas and social structures which are varied. Weber like Marx also agreed to the economy as a base structure in understanding social change, but he has also stressed on the role of ideas and values in understanding social as well as cultural evolution. Therefore, the basic

difference between Weber and Marx remains in the fact that Marx stressed on economic determinism or he attempted to establish economy as the sole factor responsible for class struggle but Weber has stressed on economy as well as values and ideas. (Lewis A. Coser, 2007: 224)

9.3.3.4 Value Relevance and Value-neutrality in Social Sciences

Weber emphasized on the value-neutral method of social research and on the value-related problem choices of the researcher. By value-relevance, Weber emphasizes on the selection of the problem by the researcher and not on the interpretation of the phenomena. On the other hand, value-neutrality refers to the fact that once the social scientist chooses their problems in terms of its relevance to either their own values or of others, they must hold those values in accordance with the guidelines that the data reveals. In this context, the researcher cannot impose their own values but are compelled to pursue their line of inquiry based on the available data only. (Lewis. A. Coser, 2007: 221)

Weber attempted to explain that in the modern times all the modern sciences want to free themselves from value judgements. Social sciences, on the other hand, do not eliminate the problem of values but consider and make it a part of scientific consideration. (F. H. Blum: 1944)

9.3.3.5 Value Free Research and Research with Values

Weber argues that being a part of the social world, it becomes difficult on the part of the Sociologists to remain value-free while conducting social research and therefore the alternative of value-free is interpretative sociology which is impartial, unbiased and its focus is mainly on interpretation. In this regard the main work of a sociologist is not just to observe people's action but to share the meaning attached to it and also appreciate why they act in that particular manner. (Berger, 2010)
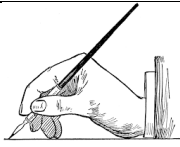
1. Define the term 'Verstehen'.

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2. Verstehen is a French word. (True/False)

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3. Weber had firm believe on the twin factors i.e. historical as well as.................... Causality.

4**.** Define the term value-neutrality.

9.4 OBJECTIVITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Weber states that it is only with the use of ideal types that the subjectivity of the researcher can be replaced by objectivity of total neutrality. He proposes that unlike the natural sciences whose aim is to establish natural laws based on experimentation and causal explanation, the social sciences attempt to understand the phenomena. Therefore, social sciences lack objectivity. The social sciences are concerned with the role value judgements play in research and whether this type of research contains claims about desirability of actions. Weber considers social sciences as value-laden. Therefore, they can achieve some degree of objectivity by putting aside the social researcher's view on whether the goals of the agents are commendable.

Weber, in his famous essay on "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy" (1904-1949), argued that the idea of a value-free social science was meaningless: There is no absolutely objective scientific analysis of "social phenomena" independent of social and "one-sided" viewpoints. All knowledge of cultural reality, as may be seen, is always knowledge from points of view. (Reiss, 2014: 81)

There are two basic reasons for this: firstly, social reality is too complex to admit of full description and explanation from which one may be selected. Whereas in contrast to the natural sciences, we cannot just select those aspects of the phenomena that fall under universal natural laws and treat everything else as "unintegrated residues" (ibid:73). Secondly, this is so because in the social sciences we want to understand social

phenomena in their individuality, that is, in their unique configurations that have significance for us.

It is therefore noteworthy that Weber never thought about the differences between social and natural sciences as natural sciences attempts to explain any natural phenomena in their own way, but the social sciences seeks to examine the causes behind phenomena of interest. Thus, the causal effects differ in both the cases as in natural sciences, establishment of laws is final whereas in social sciences, laws form an integral part as it attempts to explain any social phenomena in their uniqueness.

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, "Weber, on the philosophical side his important contribution was a theory of value-freedom, a complex formulation often mistakenly interpreted as a naive belief in objectivity. For Weber, the choice of science and of sociology was a value choice, which could not be judged in terms of instrumental rationality. This was true also of the selection of a particular object of study. However, once these choices were made, a sociological study could be value-free in the sense that its rational coherence was subject to the criticisms of the scientific community. What might be meant by rational, however, was itself open to historical change. In this sense, social scientific work is hemmed in by values, not only the values of the individual sociologists but also those of the community of social scientists and the prevailing culture as a whole."

9.5 SUMMING UP

Max Weber is undoubtedly an enormous and greatest contributor to sociology in general as well as methodology in particular. He has immensely and explicitly written on a variety of topics of sociological interest. In a nutshell it can be concluded that Weber may be considered as the greatest sociologist of the twentieth century. Weber in all his writings has maintained his key concerns as objectivity, neutrality,

analytical approach, scientific fervour and historical insights. He has largely emphasized on the necessity of keeping social science value-free and has also clearly stated the important role of values in our social life. He has also stressed on the use of ideal types in social sciences. Along with these entire concepts he has greatly contributed to social causality and probability. As Raymond Aron has remarked, "whether one considers comprehension, or the ideal type, or the distinction between value-judgement and value-reference, or subjective meaning as a proper subject for the sociologist's curiosity, or the contrast between the way writers have understood themselves and the way the sociologists understands them, one is tempted to multiply the questions, if not the objections."

Glossary

1. Theory: It refers to an account of the world which goes beyond what we see and measure.

2. Probability: It is the fact that each case in the universe being studied must have an equal chance of being selected.

3. Causality: The concept which states that one cause leads to another under certain circumstances.

4. Intuitive: A feeling based on what one feels to be true even without conscious reasoning.

5. Paradigm: It is a typical pattern of something or model.

6. Fervour: It refers to a strong feeling or belief in something.

7. Neutrality: A state of not supporting or helping either side in a conflict, impartiality etc.

8. Instrumental rationality: A type of rationality focusing on the most efficient means to achieve at a specific end, but not in itself reflecting on the value of that end.

9. Insane: A state of mind which prevents normal perception, behaviour or social interaction.

9.6 QUESTIONS

1. Give a detailed description of the twin concepts of theory linking it with the methodology in the light of Weber's methodology.
2. Write an essay on the methodological issues in Social Sciences put forwarded by Max Weber.
3. "Weber put forwarded four different methodological traditions used in the field of sociology directly or indirectly prior to his contributions to sociology." In the light of this statement explain the four methodological traditions put forwarded by Weber used in the field of sociology.
4. "Weber is of the view that interpretative understanding is only a preliminary step in the establishment of causal relationships." Throw considerable light on the concept of Verstehen or interpretative understanding.
5. Explain the link between the concepts of 'Causality' and 'Probability' as put forwarded by Max Weber.
6. Write a note on 'value-free research' and 'research with values'.

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MODULE IV: EMILE DURKHEIM

UNIT 10: THE SOCIOLOGY OF EMILE DURKHEIM

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Objective

10.3 Development of Sociology as a Discipline

10.4 Rules Relative to Establishing Sociological Proofs

10.5 *The Division of Labour in Society*

10.6 Durkheim's Study on Suicide

    10.6.1 Definition of Suicide

    10.6.2 Individual Forms of the Different Types of Suicide

10.7 The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life

10.8 Summing Up

10.9 Questions

10.10 Recommended Readings and References

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, you will learn about Emile Durkheim who made a major contribution to the development of the discipline of sociology. The numerous works of Durkheim gave a distinct methodology to the discipline of sociology. Although August Comte is known for giving the name to the discipline, the science of sociology grew as a professional subject with the works of Durkheim.

For Durkheim, the science of Sociology deals with the study of various aspects of social life with emphasis on classification and explanation (Gurvitch, 1962:11; as quoted in Thompson, 2002). The base of such social types is collective consciousness which cannot be reduced to individual consciousness. Durkheim considers sociology as the science of institutions. He argues that sociology deals with the

study of origin and function of institutions (Durkheim, 1938). Durkheim further states that institutions are associated with the all the types of beliefs and the ways of conduct related to the collectivity (Durkheim, 1938:13).

Durkheim also states that sociology is associated with the study of *social facts*. For him, *social facts* can be defined as the ways of acting or thinking which are general in nature as they are present throughout the society. They have an external constraint on the individual, but they are not dependent on the nature of individual manifestations (Durkheim, 1938:13). Durkheim argues that the first essential for a sociologist is to consider *social facts* as things (Durkheim, 1938:34).

Durkheim argues that the *social fact*s are different from individual facts (Lukes, 1975:20-21). He mentions that *social fact*s are determined by society, but the individual facts are determined either organically or by biological factors. Durkheim mentions that *social facts* are distinctive of a society, but individual facts are characteristics of *human nature* (Lukes, 1975:20-21). While *social facts* are present in the society and hence they are general for the society, the individual facts are present in either one or several individuals. For Durkheim, *social fact*s have an external constraint on individual whereas individual facts originate in the individual consciousness (Lukes, 1975:20-21).

10.2 OBJECTIVES

The basic objective of this unit is to discuss the sociology of Emile Durkheim. In this context, an attempt has been made to see the sociological features inherent in the major studies of Durkheim. By the end of this Unit, you are expected to:

- Distinguish Durkheim from other social thinkers;
- Describe the basic ideas and concepts of Durkheim.

10.3 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE

As someone associated with giving a distinctive methodology to sociology, Durkheim was aware of the challenges that the discipline had to face in the initial phase of development. He clearly talked about the challenges to the discipline in the inaugural lecture of the first course on Sociology in 1887 in France. Durkheim argued that sociology had only a few principles because of the fact that the discipline as a teaching subject had a recent origin. He suggested the followers of young science of sociology be not so ambitious. He argued that sociology could have large acceptability among the scientist by having a modest representation (Durkheim, 1978:43-44)

One of the important characteristics of the nature of sociology advocated by Durkheim was cross-fertilization with other disciplines. Durkheim argues that there is a necessity of urgent reform in sociology by bringing it close to those techniques that will help it to get those data that are so far been not possessed by it. He also talks about how such cross-fertilization will also help the other disciplines to become true social science by getting sociological ideas (Durkheim, 1964:381.) In this context, Durkheim started a new periodical entitled *Anne Sociologique* in 1896 with a broad objective to bring sociology closer to other disciplines. One of the main objectives of the periodical was to have studies on such topics as the history of religion, morality, economy, etc. which stirred up interest in the sociologists (Durkheim, 1964:381.)

While Durkheim gave due recognition to Comte for his contribution to the establishment of the discipline of sociology, he was also critical of Comte's idea of creating an all-encompassing science. Durkheim argued that sociology is associated with specific questions of particular objects (Durkheim, 1964:380). There is a need for looking at these questions as

distinct and separate although there may be some interrelation among them with the advancement of the science of sociology. Durkheim further argued that it is important that sociology does not make the claim to understand the total social reality that exists as in such case it will fail to exist as a positive science. There is a necessity of making a division of the discipline into various parts so that it can deal with particular problems. Hence, Durkheim wanted to make sociology suited for that phase of history associated with specialisation (Durkheim, 1964:380). In this context, Durkheim talked about *division of labour* in the discipline of sociology (Durkheim, 1964: 380). Durkheim said that there are three categories of facts that need to be studied. They are religious fact, moral and legal fact, and economic fact. He further stated that some sociologists may choose to associate with only one or more of these categories rather than working in the broad area of sociology. He also argued that a sociologist rather than working with the whole category may even choose to focus on a specific problem within the category (Durkheim, 1964:380).

10.4 RULES RELATIVE TO ESTABLISHING SOCIOLOGICAL PROOFS

It is seen that sociological explanation is associated exclusively with causality and hence the aim of a sociologist is to connect a social phenomenon to its cause, rather than looking merely at the effect of the social phenomenon. In this context, Durkheim supported comparative method as the most suitable method in Sociology because it is evident that a social phenomenon can escape the control of the experimenter ((Durkheim, 1966:125).

To use the comparative method in a scientific manner which will conform to the principle of causality, it should be based on the proposition that there is always a cause associated with a given effect (Durkheim, 1966:128).

Although various comparative methods can be applied in sociology, they cannot be of equal validity. For example, the case of the method of 'residue' which when forming the part of experimental reasoning cannot be used to study a particular phenomenon (Durkheim, 1966:129). Similar is the case with the methods of agreement and difference because they are based on the supposition that causes which are compared either differ or agree on a single point. But it is to be noted that there no science probably which can perform an experiment which can establish a truly unique character of agreement or difference (Durkheim, 1966:129). It is different with the method of variation or correlation because in such cases it is not necessary for such method to exclude all the elements which are not same with the one we are making a comparison with in order to make the method reliable (Durkheim, 1966:130).

When we compare a social institution of a given species, its different forms need to be compared among the members of the given species as well as in the preceding species. For example: if we want to study domestic organisation, then we need to first study the most rudimentary types and then by degrees, we need to move to the most complex ones (Durkheim, 1966:138).

Durkheim was an ardent advocate of Comparative Sociology. For him, comparative sociology is sociology itself; it is not a branch of sociology. It cannot be a descriptive account (Durkheim, 1966:139).

Thus, Durkheim has given following characteristics of the method of sociology:

First, he advocates that the method should be completely independent of philosophy because sociology is completely overburdened with philosophical doctrine. It is to be noted that over the period of time, sociology has acquired the character of positivistic, evolutionary and idealistic discipline (Durkheim, 1966:141).

Secondly, he advocates a method which is objective. He puts emphasis on considering *social fact*s as things and to treat them in the similar manner (Durkheim, 1966:143).

The third characteristic of the method that Durkheim advocates is exclusively sociological because when we treat *social fact* a thing, we are considering them as a social thing (Durkheim, 1966:144).

10.5 THE DIVISION OF LABOUR IN SOCIETY

In his book *The Division of Labour in Society* (1984), Durkheim tries to understand all facts present in moral life by using the methods used by the positive sciences. The basic question for Durkheim is the relation between individual personality and social solidarity. He wanted to know how those individuals who in the process of getting autonomous existence started getting more dependent on society. He wanted to see how an individual became more independent as well as more dependent on society at the same time (Durkheim, 1984: xxx). The focus of his analysis is how two movements which appear contradictory go together: social solidarity and the continuous increase in the *division of labour* (Durkheim, 1984: xxx).

Although different scholars perceived its importance since ancient times, it was Adam Smith who first explained the theory of division of labour and coined the term which was later used in social sciences and subsequently in biology (Durkheim, 1984:1). He basically talked about the concept of division of labour in terms of economic life. But with the increasing specialisation of functions, the division of labour no longer confined only to the economic life. Now science is no more associated only with philosophy. It is divided into several fragmented special disciplines each with a purpose or a method (Durkheim, 1984:2).

10.6 DURKHEIM'S STUDY ON SUICIDE

Another important contribution of Durkheim in the field of sociology is *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. Durkheim criticized the existing understanding of suicide which are either based on a psychological model or an individual model. In such context, he tried to provide a sociological understanding of suicide by looking into social causes and consequences of suicide. Durkheim stated that an individual is controlled by a reality which is bigger than individual reality (Durkheim, 2005: xxxvi-xxxvii). He termed it as a collective reality. He argued that the fixed rates of suicide in a society are dependent on the nature of each society (Durkheim, 2005: xxxvi-xxxvii). Thus, Durkheim tried to provide a sociological explanation of suicide.

Durkheim mentioned that the collective tendencies have their own existence (Durkheim, 1951:309-310). These collective tendencies affect the individual from outside by means of various channels. The effects of these are uniform in nature. Durkheim referred to the collective tendencies as *sui generis* and hence social in nature. He argued that his understanding of *social facts* as an objective and distinct method of sociology is better applicable in case of understanding suicide as a *social fact*. He drew such conclusion from the sociological understanding of suicide statistics. Such sociological understanding of suicide goes against the commonsensical understanding of suicide (Durkheim, 1951: 309-310).

10.6.1 Definition of Suicide

Durkheim defines suicide as a special type of death where the act of the victim or deed is responsible for the death of the concerned person. Durkheim writes: 'the term suicide is applied to any death which is the direct or indirect result of a positive or negative act accomplished by the victim himself" (Durkheim, 2005: xi). Therefore, suicide may

be caused by both positive violent act associated with muscular energy or negative act characterized by mere absenteeism. He gave the example of where self-destruction by dagger or firearm as well as refusal to take food can cause suicide (Durkheim, 2005: xi).

For Durkheim,

> "the term *suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result. An attempt is an act thus defined but falling short of actual death*" (Durkheim, 2005: xiii).

One of the important contributions of Durkheim in the study of suicide is that he attributed the causes of suicide to the factors outside us rather than within us (Durkheim, 2005: xii). He argues that we cannot explain the tendency of suicide for each social group neither based on an organic-psychic factor of individual nor on the physical environment. For Durkheim, the cause of suicide needs to be attributed to the social causes which lead to seasonal and regional variation in suicide (Durkheim, 2005: 97).

Durkheim talks about four major types of suicide based on his theoretical understanding of the relation between individual and society. They are egoistic suicide, altruistic suicide, anomic suicide and fatalistic suicide.

10.6.2 Individual Forms of the Different Types of Suicide

It is interesting to note here that form of death chosen in suicide is different from the very nature of suicide. Although both are related to the same act, they are different from each other. The following table is given by Durkheim helps us to understand the different types of suicide:

Aetiological and Morphological Classification of the Social Types of Suicide:

	Individual Forms assumed		
	Fundamental Character		Secondary Varieties
Basic Types	Egoistic suicide	Apathy	Indolent melancholy with self-complacence. The skeptic's disillusioned sangfroid.
	Altruistic suicide	The energy of passion or will	With a calm feeling of duty. With mystic enthusiasm. With peaceful courage.
	Anomic suicide	Irritation, disgust	Violent recriminations against life in general. Violent recriminations against one particular person (homicide-suicide).
Mixed types	Ego-anomic suicide		A mixture of agitation and apathy, of action and revery.
	Anomic-altruistic suicide		Exasperated effervescence.
	Ego-altruistic suicide		Melancholy tempered with moral fortitude.

Table source: Durkheim, 2005, p. 257.

The different types of suicides result from different types of social causes. Individuals are of different nature and therefore, their personal temperament and circumstances make the classification of the forms of suicide more complex. Although a variety of combinations make the different types of suicides there are some fundamental forms visible under the different forms of suicide (Durkheim, 2005: 257-258).

Although Durkheim's work on suicide is pioneering work in the area, it has some limitations. One of the basic criticisms that rose against it was on the nature of variables found by Durkheim as the cause of suicide. Although, there is a large appreciation of the work of suicide because of brilliant linking of theory and method and the imaginative use of the available statistics, there are some criticisms against his conceptualisation and argument. It is because in the process of providing a sociological explanation to suicide, Durkheim eliminates all the alternative explanations. He also eliminates the subjective element as a cause of suicide besides failing to make a clear distinction between egoistic and anomic suicide (Thompson, 2002: 93-94).

Durkheim in the process of establishing his own explanation of suicide showed the insufficiencies of the non-social factors and hence failed to provide a detailed comprehensive understanding of suicide. For example, the understanding of suicide by Durkheim failed to explain why some certain individuals commit suicide and others do not even though they are in the same conditions. It is because Durkheim's understanding of suicide eliminates the psychological causes of suicide. (Thompson, 2002: 94).

There is criticism raised against the theoretical adequacy of Durkheim's work on suicide. The main theoretical basis of Durkheim's work on suicide is social solidarity. He argues that egoism and anomic suicide is created because of the nature of the relation between individual and society. Although Durkheim criticised all the earlier understanding of suicide claiming they see all types of suicide as same, he failed to clearly

distinguish between different types of suicides (Thompson, 2002: 95-96).

Thus, Durkheim's study of suicide is providing a new account of suicide by looking at social causes of different types of suicide. The four main types of suicide given by Durkheim are altruistic suicide, egoistic suicide, anomic suicide and fatalistic suicide. The nature of the relation between individual and society and nature of regulation of individual by the society is the basis of such categorisation.

10.7 THE ELEMENTARY FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

The study of religion by Durkheim was an important contribution to the sociological understanding of religion. Durkheim argues that the religion cannot be total fantasy. He is of the view that even the rites and rituals that may seem barbarous or strange fulfil some individual or social needs of human beings. The justification of these rituals may seem wrong, but the science needs to unearth these justifications behind the rituals (ibid: 14-15). Durkheim mentions that there is no false religion and all the religious faiths are successful to answer some of the important questions of human survival (Durkheim, 1965:14-15)

In the introduction to one of his celebrated works, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Durkheim mentions that religion is social in nature (Durkheim, 1965: 22). The representations of the religion are collective in nature as they represent collective realities. Durkheim further argues that rites and rituals of a religion are associated with the group and they represent the condition of the group (Durkheim, 1965: 22).

Durkheim argues that all the religious beliefs and practices have one similar character irrespective of the fact whether they are simple in nature or complex. It is that all the beliefs and practices associated with a religion can be divided into two groups having opposite

characteristics i.e. *Sacred and Profane.* (Durkheim, 1965: 52). Durkheim defined religion in the following words:

> *"A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them"* (Durkheim, 1965: 62).

For Durkheim, totem forms an important element of religion. He argues that totem and society are dependent. Durkheim mentions that all the elements which are essential for arousing a sense of divinity among the members is present in society itself (Durkheim, 1965: 236-237). Durkheim stated that totem has a power of divinity over the individuals of a society and they play the same role as God plays for its worshipper. He argues that we are dependent on totem as we are dependent on God. We are dependent on some rules and thoughts which are not made or desired by us but our belief in totem made us dependent on them (Durkheim, 1965: 236-237).

Durkheim argues that religious beliefs and practices come from the society. They also represent a nature which is social (Durkheim, 1965: 488). Their foundation is dependent on society. The content of religion constitutes a different dimension of society and it cannot be differentiated from a human group (Durkheim, 1965: 488).

Durkheim further states that religious thought is associated with religious symbols and the survival of religion is dependent on these symbols. These symbols are an essential component of collective sentiments and hence there is no society which does not support the existence of such symbols (Durkheim, 1965: 474-475). In other

words, religious symbols have collective sentiments and hence they are social.

10.8 SUMMING UP

In this unit, an attempt has been made to study the sociology of Emile Durkheim by understanding his works. It is observed that the works of Durkheim on suicide, *social facts, the division of labour* or religion are distinct in nature in the sense that they try to do away with the psychological or individual understanding of these elements. He provided the sociological understanding in the sense that he tried to see the causes and consequences of these elements by looking into the factors which are social.

10.9 QUESTIONS

1. What are the distinctive characteristics of the sociology of Durkheim?
2. How is the study of suicide by Durkheim sociological in nature?
3. What are the sociological features of the study of religion by Durkheim?

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UNIT 11: FORMS OF SOLIDARITY AND DIVISION OF LABOUR

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The relation between individual and society is an important area of study by Emile Durkheim. His discussion revolves around the idea of solidarity in primitive and modern society and how does the nature of solidarity in modern times lead to *division of labour*. The study of *division of labour* by Durkheim gave us a new understanding which is substantially different from that of Adam Smith.

Durkheim divided his work into three main sections:

First, he investigates social functions of *division of labour* in order to understand its function. Secondly, he wants to find out the cause and

conditions on which the *division of labour* depends. Durkheim also attempts to observe the principal abnormal conditions that the *division of labour* can attain (Durkheim, 1984: 6-7).

11.2 OBJECTIVES

The basic objective of this unit is to discuss the forms of solidarity and the division of labour. This discussion is based on the classic work of Durkheim *The Division of Labour in Society* (Durkheim, 1984). By the end of this Unit, you will be able to:

- Explain Durkheim's concept of division of labour;

- Distinguish between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity.

11.3 THE DIVISION OF LABOUR AND ITS FUNCTIONS

According to Durkheim, it is division of labour in a society that makes the society progressive and dynamic. Hence, rather than looking into whether division of labour produces social solidarity or not, he is more concerned in explaining at what degree it produces solidarity and how it is helpful in bringing integration to the society.

Now while discussing the function of division of labour in a society Durkheim said that it is division of labour that assures the solidarity of the groups. Division of labour determines the essential traits of their constitution. Thus, when we go for evaluating the function of division of labour in a society, it may be expected that it should have a moral character. Because in common, people understand social solidarity with the help of needs of order, harmony and a general notion of moral needs. Thus, it is interesting to note that the social solidarity is a moral phenomenon and hence exact observation is not possible and it cannot be measured (Durkheim, 1984: 24)

The study of solidarity forms an important part of Durkheim's sociology. Durkheim argues that Solidarity is a *social fact* which may be known via social effects. Although, solidarity is a *social fact*, it depends on the individual organism. But when we study solidarity from this view point it helps us to know the things which make solidarity possible. It hardly tells us about how solidarity is formed (Durkheim, 1984: 27).

Durkheim thus argued that there is a need to formulate and classify certain laws which will help us to know how solidarity is formed and what type of social solidarity is specific to a law. It means that there will be a kind of law which will signify a kind of solidarity that will result in *division of labour*. Thus, when we are successful to find out what role the *division of labour* can play, it will be possible for us to find out the legal rules that correspond to it (Durkheim, 1984: 28). In this context, the classification of the legal rules can be done based on different sanctions which are associated with the legal rules (Durkheim, 1984: 28)

The laws can be of two kinds: the first kind of law is associated with imposition of injury or disadvantage on the person committing the crime. The function of such law is to dispose the person of the different fortune, life or liberty. Such laws have repressive sanctions (Durkheim, 1984: 29). Even the moral sanctions can have similar character, but the ways the laws associated with the imposition of the repressive sanction is administered in organised manner. It is different from the diffused manner of the imposition of the moral sanctions. There are some kinds of sanctions which are not associated with imposing any suffering on the person committing the crime. Rather, it is aimed at restoring the affair to the previous state, the normal state. This can be done in forcible manner by redressing the action or by deprivation from the social values. For Durkheim, the legal rules are

either repressive or restitutive. Repressive law covers all the penal laws. All other laws like the civil law or commercial law etc constitute restitutive laws (Durkheim, 1984: 29).

11.4 MECHANICAL SOLIDARITY OR SOLIDARITY BY SIMILARITY

Mechanical solidarity is the characteristics of a society where beliefs and sentiments are present among the most members of the society. Such belief and sentiments are termed as collective or common consciousness (Durkheim, 1984: 38). Although, they diffuse over the whole society, but they have a distinct character of their own. Such collective consciousnesses are different from the one that the individual may find. All individual, generation after generation, whether from north or from south need to abide by the collective beliefs and sentiments and hence it is different from the individual belief and sentiments.

The use of collective consciousness is not without ambiguity. It is because we tend to use the terms 'collective' and the 'social' in synonymous manner as if collective consciousness is entirely constituted by the social consciousness. But in reality, both are different. Collective consciousness is the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society. This society forms a determinate system which has its own life, and it is quite different from the conscience of an individual, although it can be realised only through them. (Durkheim, 1893/1964:79-80)

Now after reading the above paragraph, the following points may come to your mind:

i.   Collective consciousness is occurring throughout a given society through the totality of people's beliefs and sentiments.

ii.   Durkheim clearly conceived collective consciousness as being an independent, determinate cultural system, although it is realized through individual consciousness.

Thus, according to Durkheim, all functions of psychological order which can be judicial, governmental, scientific or industrial as a system of representation lies outside the common consciousness. In this context, it is better to have a technical expression which will mean sum of the social similarities. Durkheim advocates the use of the term 'collective consciousness' or 'common consciousness' to make it understandable. (Durkheim, 1984: 38-39).

Meanwhile, according to Durkheim, early societies are characterised by limited division of labour, simply by age and sex. Here mechanical solidarity prevails through likeness among the people. Each person carries out essentially the similar types of tasks, where they share the same values based on common beliefs and common life situations.

Durkheim mentioned that in this kind of society, we found the existence of repressive laws which are the vital part of the mechanical solidarity. Repressive law or penal law works as a legal code or system which holds that if a crime is committed, it means it is an offence to all since it is considered as an offence to the common morality and the shared value system. People altogether accept it as an offence, regardless of how serious it is and severe punishment is likely to be meted out. This rejection of crime and criminal behaviour helps in the maintenance of social solidarity. Thus, penal law guards the society.

Besides this, mechanical solidarity also insists on minimum similarities from each member of the society that helps in maintaining unity of the society. It also enforces the respect for those symbols

which characterise resemblances and help to guarantee the resemblance (Durkheim, 1984: 61).

Thus, social solidarity is a product of condition which leads to the creation of a state of common consciousness for all members of the society. Repressive law is the most essential element of such solidarity. The contribution of the repressive law lies in maintaining common consciousness in society and to regulate society based on this common consciousness that brings general integration to the society (Durkheim, 1984: 64). When the common consciousness is felt on more varied individuals, it helps in the cohesion of the individuals into the group. Such relationships are also the result of the repressive laws.

The judicial apparatus represented by the penal laws contributes significantly to the maintenance of social solidarity. There are also some aspects of the collective consciousness that contribute to the maintenance of social harmony. But such aspects do not constitute repressive law as their intensity is low or they do not have determinate nature. The nature of punishment that such elements provide is merely of diffuse kind. There are also some laws which are supplemented by the social customs (Durkheim, 1984: 64).

11.5 ORGANIC SOLIDARITY OR SOLIDARITY DUE TO DIVISION OF LABOUR

Organic solidarity is the solidarity that also resulted from *division of labour*. But the difference is that it is a solidarity based upon differentiation, not similarity. The individuals are no longer similar, and differentiated based on thinking, emotions and values. There is hardly much consciousness among them. In such a situation collective consciousness begins to decline. Even then the society is marked by division of labour that gives birth to organic solidarity, which is

characterised by specialisation and individualism. In this kind of society, we have restitutive law, which gives a different and unique character to organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1984: 68). The distinctive character of the restitutive law lies in its role in restoration of the status quo of the society. In restitutive law, the individual who commits an offence by breaking law is not given any suffering; rather he is condemned for the act. The basic judgement of such laws is to bring the condition to original situation (Durkheim, 1984: 68).

While the repressive laws are characterised by their diffuse character throughout the society, restitutive laws are part of some specialised bodies. Restitutive laws are mainly observed in the consular courts or industrial tribunals or administrative tribunal. If such laws need to be used in case of some general sector like civil law, it is done by some special officials like magistrate, lawyer etc who have special training that make them equipped to use such laws (Durkheim, 1984: 69-70).

Various co-operative laws with restitutive sanctions results in relationship of solidarity because of *division of labour*. These cooperative laws do not have any other kind of sanction. The distinct nature of cooperative law leaves no effect on the collective consciousness. It is because the collective consciousness is present in every individual and as such it is shared consciousness which everyone can conceive (Durkheim, 1984: 81-82).

On the other hand, negative solidarity does not have their distinct character and they cannot bring any solidarity on their own. For Durkheim, there are two types of positive solidarity. The characteristics of positive solidarity are:
In the first type, there is no intermediary between individual and society. On the other hand, individual is dependent upon the society through constituting parts (Durkheim, 1984: 83). Again, there are

differences between the two types based on the perspective adopted to view them. The first one is collective in its nature as there are beliefs and sentiments that are present among the members of society making it organised. On the other hand, there are also specific relationships present in society, which helps us to work together based on distinct functions (Durkheim, 1984: 83). This difference is the basis of characterising two types of solidarity (Durkheim, 1984: 83).

In the first case, there are ideas and tendencies present among the members of society and they exceed the intensity of ideas and tendencies which are present in individual members (Durkheim, 1984: 84). Thus, the personal ideas and tendencies lose their importance in the context of collective ideas. Again, when the common situation which created the common collective consciousness is disturbed, the individual will no longer have common experiences, that will again result in a different kind of solidarity emerging from *division of labour*. While the former assumes the similarity of the individual to each other, the latter give importance to the differences that lies with the members of the society. In the first case, it is given importance for the absorption of individual personality in the collective one. In the second case, more importance is given to the peculiarity of the individual personality (Durkheim, 1984: 85). Thus, in the second case, it is not possible for the collective consciousness to cover all parts of the individual consciousness which creates a condition where some parts of the society remain unregulated. Such free areas help in stronger cohesion for social solidarity. When individual is more intimately associated with society, it leads to increase *division of labour* which is associated with more specialisation of the corresponding activity making them more personal.

But there is some distinct nature of the activities which is common to us and how different individuals perceive it. Even in case of our

profession that may have usage and practices that are common to us, the burden that we bear give us room for the free play of our initiatives. In such a context, individuality of the parts grows along with the whole. Although society grows together with the differences, these differences also have their own peculiarity. Thus, when we have a variety of different settings, each setting leads toward its own consciousness. This is the characteristics of higher organisms. The different parts of the organism contribute to the unity of the organism despite having their own characteristics and peculiarities. Organic solidarity is thus resulted from this kind of *division of labour.* It is associated with individualisation of the parts but also at the same time it helps in developing 'organic' solidarity like that of the organs of an organism (Durkheim, 1984: 85).

It is interesting to note that the primitive societies are characterised by resemblance that lead to mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1984: 88). On the other hand, difference characterised the modern society that lead to organic solidarity.

11.6 CONSEQUENCES OF INCREASING PREPONDERANCE OF ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

Mechanical solidarity is not common in contemporary time. As a result, segmental nature of arrangement no longer forms the essential feature of the society. It is because the territorial division of society have some artificial character. The nature of ties that the human being can have because of living together cannot be same to that ties arising from the blood relationships (Durkheim, 1984: 135-136).

Again, nature of segmentary organisation will vanish because of the network. It is only in the traditional society that the boundary of the simple segments was maintained without any extension beyond the boundary of the segment. All the segments in such case like towns,

their neighbourhood wanted to be self-sufficient (Durkheim, 1984: 136-137)

Thus, there are two types of solidarity and two corresponding social types. Two types of solidarity have inverse relationship to each other. It means that increase in organic solidarity is associated with the decrease in the domain of mechanical solidarity. Similarly, when there is increase in the influence of the society based on organic solidarity, the significance of other type of society decreases. The *division of labour* characterised the societies of organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1984: 141).

There is some other significance of *division of labour* besides maintaining organic solidarity. It helps in maintaining the cohesion of our society. As *division of labour* is associated with making the structure of society, it can be predicted that their significance will increase in future (Durkheim, 1984: 141).

11.7 ORGANIC SOLIDARITY AND CONTRACTUAL SOLIDARITY

The domestic obligations are taking a private character as they are becoming more numerous. In such context, role played a person within certain obligations (or contract) are continuously decreasing. But on the other hand, social controls associated with such domestic obligation are increasing (Durkheim, 1984: 157-158). This is happening due to the progressive disappearance of the segmentary organisations in the society. It is found that everything segmentary is increasingly absorbed into the larger society.

In this way, gradually, the segmentary organisation of society disappears. For long, family was taken as true social component. Initially, family was seen along with clan and later family became distinct from clan. But, it continues to remain as a component of the whole system. Family is

outcome of secondary division of the clan. It is like the origin of the clan itself. It is to be noted that everything which is segmentary in nature are to be incorporated into the society. It also results in the transformation of the family. Instead of remaining autonomous from the society, family is drawn to the organs of the society and as such it is used in special function of the society. Family became regulatory organ of the society. Family can have positive stimulus for the society for their moderating effect (Durkheim, 1984: 157-158).

While summing up the work, Durkheim made the proposition that individual consciousness and social *division of labour* constitute the dual source from which social life is derived. It is seen that in the first condition, the individual members are socialised and mixed with those of the collective group and they lost their individuality. On the other hand, we also find the cases where an individual has some problems personal to her/him that differentiate her/him from the others. Yet s/he depends on other members of society in a similar manner where s/he is differentiated, that leads him to create her/his own combination of like-minded people.

The consciousness which is like all individuals imposes uniform beliefs and practices upon everybody due to legal rules which are product of repressive measures. When the similarity is more pronounced, it leads to complete mix up of religious life with the social life.

The *division of labour* is associated with some legal rules which can result in forming a relationship between the nature and the divided functions of a cause. If there is any infringement of the rules, it will only have measures for reparation, but they are not of expiatory character.

There are a set of purely moral rules associated with each set of legal rules. The nature of common morality is very extensive when the penal law is very voluminous. There are many collectivities which are put

under the protection of the public opinion. A professional morality exists for each profession in case of very developed restitutory law. A public opinion exists within a group which is diffused throughout the group and obeyed by the members of the group despite lacking any legal sanctions. Nobody can infringe the customs and usages that are present among the members of the group. The infringement of the customs and usages may lead to reprimand of the corporation (Durkheim, 1984: 172).

The regulation of professional ethics and law force the individual to act in accordance with them. Thus, an individual must make concessions, to agree, to compromise mainly to adapt with the superior interest (Durkheim, 1984: 172-173). As a result, even in case of societies which are based on the *division of labour* we observe that they do not have juxtaposed atoms (humans) who can have only external and minimal contact. The members are related by some connection that exists even outside the brief time when the social exchange and social interaction takes place. Members are dependent on each other for different functions. As a result, permanent duties define the nature of task which leads to the fulfilment of some functions. It is essential because there are some obligations which are always attached to our nature of duties from which we cannot separate ourselves. (Durkheim, 1984)

State is one organ to which our dependence continues to grow. The point of contact with the state are multiplied. It also reminds us of our common solidarity in many occasions (Durkheim, 1984: 172-173).

11.8 DIVISION OF LABOUR AND HAPPINESS

The important question that Durkheim kept in mind is to know the cause of *division of labour* (Durkheim, 1984: 179)

Division of labour has many causes. Regular development of *division of labour* takes place when the segmentary structure goes away.

Durkheim argues that as the disappearance of the segmentary structure is associated with the progress of the *division of labour*, the latter may be taken as the cause of the former (Durkheim, 1984: 200).

There is again more developed and advanced form of division of labour, where individuals are in sufficient contacts. They can mutually act or react upon one another. This active exchange and drawing together can be called *dynamic or moral density* (Durkheim, 1984: 201). Thus, the progress or development of the *division of labour* is directly related to moral density (Durkheim, 1984: 201).

The drawing together of the individuals morally will be fruitful only if the real distance between the individual are made less. It is not possible to increase the moral density if there is no simultaneous increase in the physical density. In fact, the physical density of the society can help us to measure the extent of moral density. As both physical density and the moral density are inseparable, it is useless to investigate which of the two has effect on the other (Durkheim, 1984: 201).

Durkheim argues that there are three main ways in which there is continuous increase of the density of the societies along with the historical development (Durkheim, 1984: 201-203):

In the first case, the population continuously became more concentrated in case of advanced societies. It is different from that of lower societies where spread in area is more in comparison to the spread in the population. Secondly, progressive increase of the density of the population is also characterised by the development of the towns. The single cause of increase of average density is the increase of the birth rate (ibid: 201-203). Thirdly, the density of the society can be increased by the abolition of the vacuum that separates the social segments by increasing the communication speed and number of means of transmission (Durkheim, 1984: 201-203). These

societies are present in large number and they are good example of societies of higher type (Durkheim, 1984: 201-203).

The multiplication of the intra-social relationship associated with the increasing concentration of the people causes such effects. A more numerous society means that the large number of members is present in society which causes closer contact among them. (Durkheim, 1984: 203). This signifies the similar effect of social volume on the *division of labour* in society (Durkheim, 1984: 203).

At the end, Durkheim formulates the following proposition:

Durkheim argues that the volume and density of population have direct effect on the *division of labour* (Durkheim, 1984: 205).

It means that the continuous increase of volume and density of the societies because of social development leads to corresponding increase in the *division of labour* (Durkheim, 1984: 205).

11.9 SECONDARY FACTORS OF DIVISION OF LABOUR

Thus, the growth of the *division of labour* is associated with the reduction of collective consciousness which became gradually vague. But it is interesting to note that even in such a case, *division of labour* became the main reason of solidarity (Durkheim, 1984: 226).

The collective consciousness is more in case of small societies because all are present in the similar situation of existence which gives a concrete collective environment (Durkheim, 1984: 229). But along with the growth of societies which is spread in larger area, it leads to existence of common consciousness despite much local diversity. This common consciousness that spreads over larger space is obviously

abstract in nature and found over a variety of environment. (Durkheim, 1984: 229)

The spread of society and subsequent increase in the density is associated with the less tight envelopment of the individuals. It results in less restraint of the diverging tendencies (Durkheim, 1984: 238).

11.10 THE ANOMIC DIVISION OF LABOUR

Although, it is observed so far that *division of labour* can be taken as a normal process. but, it can be pathological like that of the other *social fact*s or biological cases (Durkheim, 1984: 291). Although, *division of labour* normally results in social solidarity, it can also produce opposite results leading to reduction in social solidarity (Durkheim, 1984).

Durkheim discusses three types of exceptional cases where *division of labour* is associated with the reduction in the social solidarity and for him although some other cases may also exist, but the cases he mentions are more general and more serious (Durkheim, 1984: 292).

He gives the example of industrial and commercial crises and the various bankruptcies which causes break of organic solidarity. It means that there are some social functions which are not adjusted to another function. Such phenomena became more common due to increase in *division of labour* (Durkheim, 1984: 292). Another similar example is the increasing hostility between labour and capital. The struggle became more prominent with the increase of specialisation of industrial function and it leads to decrease in solidarity (Durkheim, 1984: 292). Another important issue is the legal indeterminacy in the relationship between capital and labour. Durkheim argues that the legal code of contract for the hiring of services occupies a very small place in our society considering the

diversity and complexity of the relationship that such codes are supposed to regulate (Durkheim, 1984: 303).

The above examples that show the negative implication of the *division of labour* are of similar nature. It is because in all the cases the non-regulation of the relationships between the organs leads to the failure of *division of labour* to cause solidarity. It results in the situation of anomie (Durkheim, 1984: 304).

11.11 THE SITUATION OF FORCED DIVISION OF LABOUR

Class as an institution can also be an organisation which is associated with division of labour. And as they are associated with close regulation, they can also be the cause of dissent. The roles that the lower classes need to fulfil because of custom or law are no longer met by the institutions of lower classes. Durkheim argues that it leads to civil wars (Durkheim, 1984: 311). He further argues that institutions of lower classes produce misery rather than that of solidarity as social function of caste and class are distributed in a manner that fails to match the natural capabilities (Durkheim, 1984: 311).

The forced *division of labour* is another constraint in solidarity. Although the tasks are allocated to each organ of the society based on law, each organ performs its own function spontaneously. If the regulations are without any moral foundation and are maintained by force, then constraint can occur (Durkheim, 1984: 312).

11.12 ANOTHER ABNORMAL FORM

Another abnormal type described by Durkheim can be seen in the various commercial and industrial enterprises where distribution of

the function fails to provide sufficient scope for individual activity. In such context, we observe that there is waste of effort. It is interesting to note that this waste is because of the absence of co-ordination in the functions (Durkheim, 1984: 323).

11.13 SUMMING UP

In conclusion, Durkheim argues that *division of labour* can cause solidarity. He described how social order is maintained in societies with the help of two different solidarities, mechanical and organic. His division of labour follows certain type of laws and codes in society where people abide by different rights and duties. Hence, Durkheim's division of labour is not similar with the division of labour discussed by economists, because, here he assumes each person as an agent in the process of exchange. (Durkheim, 1984: 337-338). Durkheim's *division of labour* produces some rules that ensure that there is peaceful co-ordination among the divided functions (Durkheim, 1984: 337-338).

It is again observed that significant changes have occurred in the structure of society over short duration of time. These changes have led to our liberation from segmentary structure of society. As a result, the significance of morality associated with segmentary nature of society is lost. But, this is not associated with any occupation of our consciousness which is vacated by the morality of segmentary type of society. It is associated with the loss of the importance of tradition and our belief system being disturbed in present times. Its remedy does not depend on the revival of the tradition and practices, as they are no more corresponding to the contemporary society. The anomic condition can be stopped by bringing harmonious cooperation among the organs of contemporary society. There is a need to diminish external inequalities (Durkheim, 1984: 339-340).

11.14 QUESTIONS

1. Explain the relation between individual and society with the help of Durkheim's analysis of *Division of Labour*.

2. How does *division of labour* promote social solidarity?

11.15 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 12: CONTRIBUTION TO THE METHODOLOGY OF SOCIOLOGY- SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENCE: SOCIAL FACT, NORMAL AND PATHOLOGICAL

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Emile Durkheim is one of the founders of Sociology for his influential works which greatly influenced the development of the Sociology. The important works of Durkheim include *The Division of Labour in Society* published in 1893, *The Rules of Sociological Method* published in 1895, *Suicide* published in 1897 and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* published in 1912. Apart from these, *L'Annee sociologique,* a journal founded by Durkheim in 1898 also has great influence on the development of the discipline.

Durkheim's influence on the development of the subject matter of the discipline of Sociology is observed from the fact that it was him who asserted that Sociology has its own subject matter which cannot be 'reduced' to other disciplines such as individual psychology

(Thompson, 2002: xii). According to him, *social facts* should be considered as 'things' (Thompson, 2002: xiii). Further, he stated that *social facts* are a property of the whole and hence have an irresistible influence on the behaviour of the individuals (Thompson, 2002: xiii), This has a deep impact on the methodological orientation of sociology.

12.2 OBJECTIVES

This unit attempts to introduce you to the basic works of Emile Durkheim. In this context, this unit will introduce you to the major works of Emile Durkheim with emphasis on the Nature of Sociology as Science. By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method;*

- Describe social fact;

- Explain Durkheim's concept of normal and pathological.

12.3 THE RULES OF SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD AND SOCIAL FACT

Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method* is his main contribution to the methodological development of sociology where he developed the idea of 'social fact' that later formed the basis of positivists orientation in sociology. For Durkheim, *social facts* remain outside individual consciousness and they consist of various ways of thinking, acting or feeling (Durkheim, 1966: 2). For Durkheim, apart from being external to the individual, these thoughts have a coercive power on the individual because it can be imposed upon an individual even though s/he may not want it or attempt to resist it (Durkheim, 1966: 2). These constraints may be indirect or less violent but are effective and always exist in society. For example, if a person does not follow

the convention of the society and does not go by the customs of her/his class or country, then the nature of social isolation or ridicule s/he must face can have the same effect as that of punishment (Durkheim, 1966: 2-3).

Thus, *social facts* have a specific character. On the one hand, they exist outside of the individual, on the other hand, they also have the power of coercion and hence they can control the individual (Durkheim, 1966: 3). The nature of acting or thinking that characterise the *social facts* is not like biological or psychological one, but they have the characteristics of being social. Hence it is important to use of the term "social" in *social fact*s since they lie not in the individual but in the society (Durkheim, 1966:3). He argues that the main area of the discipline of Sociology is constituted by these ways of thinking or acting (Durkheim, 1966: 4).

Durkheim also differentiates between individual consciousness and collective consciousness. He argues that a social phenomenon has a collective dimension of beliefs and practices of a group (Durkheim, 1966: 6-7) Durkheim further states that a sociological phenomenon is not understood by their universal presence. It is because the mere presence of something among different individuals does not make it a *social fact* (Durkheim, 1966: 6-7). He further argues that social facts have their own reality which is distinct from the individual facts and as such it is different from the individual manifestations (Durkheim, 1966: 7).

On the other hand, there can be some currents of opinion which may have different intensity across time and place that may compel a certain group to do a particular work. These currents can be called social facts. For example, some currents of opinion may force some to have more suicides, more marriages or to have high or low birth rates (Durkheim, 1966: 8).

Further, Durkheim argues that if a *social fact* is present among all members of the society or it is present among most of the members of the society, then it can be taken as a collective phenomenon. *A social fact* is taken as general because of its collective nature and the group conditions are imposed on the individual. He concludes that it exists in the part as it exists in the whole not the other way around (Durkheim, 1966: 9).

Another important aspect of the *social fact* is the external coercion that it has over the individual (Durkheim, 1966: 10). This can be recognised from the fact that there are some distinct sanctions or resistance for the individual who does not follow the *social fact* (Durkheim, 1966: 10). Durkheim also stated that *social fact* is diffused in the group and it is not dependent on the individual form (Durkheim, 1966: 10).

In the words of Durkheim,

> '*A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations*' (Durkheim, 1966: 13).

12.4 RULES FOR THE OBSERVATION OF SOCIAL FACTS

Durkheim gives different rules that can be used for the observation of *social facts*. He argues that we should consider *social facts as things* and it is the first and most fundamental rule (Durkheim, 1966: 14) for the observation of social facts.

He argues that social things are a product of human activity which is actualised only through people. It is because social things are overt manifestations of ideas contained in the mind and there is use of these

ideas in different circumstances that involves the relations of individuals (Durkheim, 1966: 17).

He further argues that Comte implicitly see social fact as a thing when he declares that social phenomena are natural facts which are subject to the natural laws because there are only things in nature (Durkheim, 1966: 18).

Durkheim further argues that social phenomena which ought to be treated as things constitute the unique data for the sociologists. These social phenomena have the character of a thing because they are subject to external observation. (Durkheim, 1966: 27). There is a need to study social phenomena objectively as external things which are different from the consciously constituting representation of social phenomena in the mind (Durkheim, 1966: 28). He said that we cannot modify the characteristics of a 'thing' by a simple effort of the will.

Durkheim has given some of the principle rules of a sociologist. Durkheim said that all the earlier understanding needs to be eliminated (Durkheim, 1966: 31). He wanted the emancipation of the sociologists from the various fallacious ideas which are dominating the mind of the common man (Durkheim, 1966: 32). Durkheim argued that our political and religious beliefs and our moral standards have an emotional aspect that influences the way we conceive and explain a particular thing (Durkheim, 1966: 32).

Durkheim argued that there are some group of phenomena that are conceptualised with the help of characteristics which are external and present among the members. These need to be the subject matter of the discipline of sociology (Durkheim, 1966: 35). Thus, the external characteristics form the main element for knowing the group of phenomena that constitute the subject matter of sociological study.

12.5 THE NORMAL AND THE PATHOLOGICAL

Durkheim divided the sociological phenomena into two types: the 'normal' and the 'pathological'. There are some social phenomena or social conditions which are most generally distributed, and they are called 'normal'. On the other hand, there are some other sociological phenomena that are present only in a small number of cases. They are not present in the all individuals and hence they can be considered as 'morbid' or 'pathological' (Durkheim, 1966: 55). Further, *a social fact* which is present in the particular time of development of social species can be considered as normal. Durkheim argues that it is not enough to observe the generality of the social fact. We should also see with special emphasis the different phases in their growth (Durkheim, 1966: 57).

Durkheim formulated following three rules for *a social fact*:

The first rule is that a social fact can be considered as normal when it is seen among the average members of the society of a particular social species in a particular stage of their evolution (Durkheim, 1966: 64). The second rule talks about the verification of earlier method which is helpful to see the generality of phenomena with the help of understanding the various general conditions of collectivity present in the social type (Durkheim, 1966: 64). The third rule talks about that the social fact which is studied for a society when the society has not achieved full growth (Durkheim, 1966: 64)

Durkheim defines those facts as a crime if their pathological character is incontestable (Durkheim, 1966: 65). Crimes are present in all types of societies (Durkheim, 1966). On the other hand, he argues that the crime can be taken as normal as it is not possible to have a society which does have crime. Durkheim defined crime as an act which goes against the collective sentiment of the group (Durkheim, 1966: 67).

It is inevitable that all societies have some people who have criminal character. In every society, there are some individuals who differ from the collective and hence show divergence. Durkheim further asserts that crime is a fundamental condition of all social life because it is useful for the development of morality and law in the society (Durkheim, 1966: 70).

He further argues that there is a need for the sociologists to exclusively study social fact when they consider social fact as a thing (Durkheim, 1966: 74). He says that the main objective of all the sciences of society is to explain normal state and then to distinguish it from those which are not normal (Durkheim, 1966: 74). Sociology can be a true science of things when it considers a phenomenon as normal because of its general character (Durkheim, 1966: 74-75).

In the end, Durkheim argues that criminality has become a normal phenomenon in the nineteenth century because of the increase in the cases of crime (Durkheim, 1966: 75).

12.6 CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIAL TYPES AND THEIR RULES

Durkheim argues that a branch of sociology is needed which will deal with the constitution and classification of species based on normal and abnormal social facts (Durkheim, 1966: 76). The only procedure that exists in the study of a society is to make a complete monograph of it and compare it with other such monographs that deal with the study of the same society to see the ways in which they converge or diverge. The aim of such comparative study is to classify the peoples into groups based on similarities and differences from each other (Durkheim, 1966: 78).

It is known that societies consist of a combination of various parts. The character and the number of elements and ways of their

combination determine the nature and characteristics of aggregate i.e. societies or the general fact of social life. In this context, Durkheim defines 'social morphology' as the component of sociology that deals with the composition and the division of social types because it is the morphological order where the nature of elements of society ultimately decides the nature and character of society (Durkheim, 1966: 80-81).

Durkheim gives the principle of classification. Durkheim started his classification of societies based on the degree of organisation (Durkheim, 1966: 86). The basis of such classification will be the simple society that has one segment. He further divided such societies into various categories on the basis of whether there is coalescence in the initial segment or not (ibid: 86). Thus, Durkheim advocates the classification of societies based on the degree of organisation.

12.7 RULES USED FOR THE EXPLANATION OF SOCIAL FACTS

Durkheim also put emphasis on the explanation of the *social facts*. He said that most of the sociologists give an account of phenomena in terms of their usefulness and their role and even they explain their existence merely on the basis of the role that they play (Durkheim, 1966: 89).

But there are many important questions associated with such method. For example, when a phenomenon is explained in terms of its usefulness, it fails to answer some important questions such as the origin of such phenomenon or the questions related to why it is like that. It is because the usefulness of a phenomenon may not be responsible for their origin or for the distinct nature. The existence of the phenomenon may be because of some other causes (Durkheim, 1966: 90).

It is interesting to note that a social fact can exist even though it is not used to fulfil any important end, or it may have lost its usual utility. Society has more survivals. Sometimes, it is found that various social practices or institutions can change their functions, although their nature remains same (Durkheim, 1966: 91). In fact, the cause of the existence of society is independent of the end it serves like organs in biology that serve different purposes.

When we put emphasis on the human need in case of sociological explanation, it does not mean going back to teleology. It is because these needs can affect the evolution of society or they may themselves undergo changes that can be explained in a deterministic manner. But it cannot be all purposive (Durkheim, 1966: 95).

Durkheim argues that in the explanation of the social phenomenon, it is necessary to see the cause and function of the social phenomenon (Durkheim, 1966: 95). Durkheim used the term "function" rather than using the term "end" or "purpose' because he thought that the existence of the social phenomenon is not determined by its useful result (Durkheim, 1966: 95).

Durkheim argues that we naturally look for the cause of a phenomenon rather than looking at its effects. It is because it is a logical method were looking the cause can ultimately give us clue about the answer to the effect that it might have (Durkheim, 1966: 95). When the cause of a phenomenon is known, it will be easier to find the function (Durkheim, 1966: 96). On the other hand, it is generally seen that a phenomenon is useful to maintain itself if the user is not the cause of its existence (Durkheim, 1966: 97). Thus, it may not be sufficient to show the causes of a social fact. Sometimes, it is essential to show the function a *social fact* have in the maintenance of order in the society (Durkheim, 1966: 97). Thus, the method of explanation followed by the sociologists is an inter-connection of teleological as well as psychological approaches (Durkheim, 1966: 97).

It is interesting to note that the various sociological laws are a corollary of various general laws of psychology. It is because the various explanation of the collective life comes from or can be deduced from the analysis of the human nature itself (Durkheim, 1966: 98).

Although the individual consciousnesses are essential they are not sufficient condition for the formation of a society because of the distinctive nature of the social phenomena which vary greatly from the individual consciousness that constitute it (Durkheim, 1966: 103). Thus, as there is a break in the between biology and that of the physicochemical sciences, there is a similar break between sociology and psychology. We may have a false explanation when we try to explain a social phenomenon directly from a psychological phenomenon (Durkheim, 1966: 104).

But on the contrary, social life results from the elaboration of the work on which general characteristics of human nature participate and thus they make social life possible. But they may not cause or give a special form to social life. The various collective representations, emotions etc result from the conditions in which a social group is placed. They are not caused by the state of consciousness of the individuals. In such context, the nature of individual does not determine the social factors (Durkheim, 1966: 105-106).

Social facts have socially useful effects. Therefore, we need to see the function of social fact by looking at its social end (Durkheim, 1966: 110-111). It is to be noted that although the collective life does not come from the individual life, they are closely related. Although individual life may not be able to explain the collective life, it can at least facilitate the explanation of the collective life (Durkheim, 1966: 111).

A social phenomenon is dependent on the ways in which the elements of the society are arranged together (Durkheim, 1966: 112). Sociologist's function is to discover the course of the social phenomena (Durkheim,

1966: 113). There are two main aspects series of facts; one is several social units, which is called as 'size of the society' and the second one is 'dynamic density' or the degree of concentration of the group (Durkheim, 1966). It is interesting to note that volume and dynamic density of the societies have a profound impact on the collective life. They can have a large influence on the thought and action of the individual (Durkheim, 1966: 115).

12.8 SUMMING UP

Thus, Durkheim argues that the study of *social facts* constitutes the subject matter of the discipline of sociology. For Durkheim, *social facts* are general, external to individual and have constraining effect on the individual. Further, he divided the social phenomena into two types: normal and pathological. The study of *social fact* by Durkheim helped in the development of the methodology of sociology having an orientation to positivism.

12.9 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the subject matter of Sociology as proposed by Durkheim.
2. What is Social fact? Critically examine the relevance of Social fact in the development of Methodology of Sociology.
3. Discuss the nature and significance of social fact.

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MODULE V: VILFREDO PARETO AND GEORG SIMMEL

UNIT 13: SOCIOLOGY OF VILFREDO PARETO: LOGICO-EXPERIMENTAL METHOD

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, you will learn about an Italian sociologist—Vilfredo Pareto. Pareto was quite influential during his time but in contemporary times, his relevance is minimal. It is to be noted that he developed his major ideas as a rejection to Marx and a major portion of Enlightenment philosophy. You know that rationality was something that was emphasized the most by the Enlightenment philosophers but Pareto, on the other hand, emphasized more on the non-rational aspects such as human instincts. This makes Pareto distinct from Marx and many other Enlightenment thinkers. In the context of social change, we have seen that Marx focused on the role of the masses—the class consciousness of the proletariats would bring about revolution that would overthrow capitalist mode of production, paving the way for communism. Pareto,

on the other hand, has put forward an elite theory of social change which explains that the masses lack rational capacities and therefore cannot bring about a revolution. Social change, in that matter, occurs when the existing elite that dominates the society and rules over the masses degenerates and is replaced by new elite derived from the higher elements of the masses, thereby creating a cycle that continues.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

The unit deals with the central ideas of Pareto's intellectual life and his position in sociological research. After studying the unit, you should be able to –

- Describe the biographical details of Pareto;
- Understand his theoretical paradigm;
- Highlight the essential value and growing relevance of his contribution in sociological framework.

13.3 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in Paris on the 15th of July 1848, Vilfredo Pareto's real name was Marquis Vilfredo Frederico Domaso Pareto. His father Raphael Pareto Marchese di Parigiwas was an Italian, belonging from a descendant of an old family from Geneva. His mother Marie Pareto Marchesa di Parigi was a French woman. Pareto therefore grew up learning two languages-- Italian and French. He took his secondary education from Italy. He entered the estimable Polytechnic-Institute in Turin, Italy at the age of 21, where he studied a five-year course in mathematics, natural and physical sciences, and engineering. His work 'The Fundamental Principles of Equilibrium in Solid Bodies' was a part of his graduate thesis in 1870 where he tried to show the elasticity theory of solid bodies and integration of different equations which in return defines their equilibrium. It is to be noted that Pareto was a liberal and he was also

against colonialism. He therefore was in favour of open market and was against government intervention.

In 1889 he married a Russian girl named Dina, who was a young, impoverished girl from Venice. They moved from Florence to Fiesole, Italy where he participated in several activities such as translations from the classics, writing and speaking, reading avidly in six or seven languages, free exchange, anti-protectionism and pacifism proposed by Francesco Ferrara and his members of Adam Smith Society, where he gained interest in economics. Pareto continued his struggle against the government's foreign and domestic policies in the name of free exchange and old –fashioned liberalism by getting way of managerial duties. As he was not satisfied with the Italian political system, he turned against them. It was during the time of semi-retirement, Pareto created bonds with several Italian economists and publicists of liberal persuasion who shared his free exchange. Earlier when he got connected to the Adam Smith Society in Florence, Maffeo Pantaleoni became his close friend. Maffeo introduced him with the mathematical equilibrium system in economics which was then elaborated by Leon Walras, the Professor of political economy at Lausanne. From then on, he started contributing articles of economic theory, reflecting Walras's viewpoint to a number of well-known journals in Italy and France.

Soon after this meeting, Walras became seriously ill and had to give up teaching. Pantaleoni then suggested Walras to choose Pareto as his successor. In April 1893 Pareto joined the University of Lausanne as an 'extraordinary professor' of political economy. In the following year he was made full and permanent, at the age of forty-six. In the beginning, he started writing his critical monthly chronicle for the *Giornaledegli Economisti,* in which he summarized his non-interventionist and non-protectionist analysis of the Italian government and the wheelers and the dealers who remained in the political burden. His establishment of theoretical work as an international scholar came two years later when

his publication of two-volume study entitled *Cours d' Economie Politique* which was based on his lectures at the university. The 'Cours' basically aims to provide an outline of economic science based exclusively on facts. He divided it into two parts, the first part covering political economy while the second covering applied economics. Two ideas that dominate the book were that of successive approximation and interdependence of economic and social phenomena. He was then a well-known figure in modern economics and a true successor of Walras. Until 1898, he examined himself as a man of liberal left. At the time of May Riots at Milan, he helped many socialists and leftist refugees for shelter. It was then Pareto's view on politics changed radically and decisively. He left all his hope of a liberal restructuring Italian economic affairs and politics. He wrote:

 "I gave up the combat in liberal economic theories in Italy. My friends and I get nowhere and lose our time; this time is much more fruitfully directed to scientific study". He lost hope in the government and became a sceptical, rancorous, utterly disillusioned loner, at variance with all the dominant tendencies of the age, hating all of them without discrimination" (Coser 1971:405).

Adding to all this that had happened with him, there was another serious storm which he learned after his return from Paris, where his wife had escaped with the chef, taking with her thirty cases of valuables . Already because of politics, he was into a pathological fervour, and with this blow he never recovered rather became more psycho-pathological with his passing age.

After leading a reclusive life and suffering from heart disease, in 1907 he resigned from his daily life of university teaching but continued to give lecturers particularly on sociology. He only preferred teaching for three month a year. After so much of hurdles, finally he was able to seek divorce from his wife Bakunin in 1923 and in the very same year he remarried his long-time mistress and companion. Pareto at the age of

seventy- five in August 19, 1923 died and his sociological analyses were adopted by Benito Mussolini in his development of Italian fascism.

13.4 PARETO'S SOCIOLOGY

Pareto characterised sociology as that of social science which dealt with non-logical action of people, leaving   the analysis of logical actions to economics, technology and military science. Because of agitation, motivational factors, non-logical and irrational actions of individuals, Pareto's sociology has been called as psychological sociology to which he completely objected. Unlike other writers, Pareto too was well-educated and well-grounded scholar in all then appropriate humanistic fields of study. This framework cultivated a strong commitment towards scientific work which Pareto insisted upon limiting the scope of science that must be allowed to function exclusively within the logico-experimental method. As he was one of the pioneer contributors to the twentieth century school of logical positivism, for him science always begins with simplifications and can be precluded that they are based on non-logical evaluation rather than logico-experimental method. It can be analysed that observation, experiment and reasoning constitute fundamental methods of Pareto's science. All concepts must be defined in terms of observed or observable facts. They must correspond to realities which can either be perceived directly or by experimentation (Abraham,1985:77-78).

13.4.1 Logico-Experimental Method

According to Pareto, there must be a method for testing theory as natural science does. His logico-experimental deals with all extra or meta-empirical notions. Logic implies that, in terms of definitions laid down or relations observed, it is legitimate to deduce conclusions which results from the premises. Whereas, experimental covers both observation and experimentation (Abraham,1985:78). Both culminates as the agreement

between subjective relations and objective sequences and do not involve the determination of ends. Though Pareto occasionally suggested that the mind plays at least an instrumental or operational role in the formation of knowledge, he conducted his investigations under the assumption that knowledge is not created but exists for the mind to find (Rossides,1998:202). Basically, science is a body of fact or of causality that correspond through process of reality. Like Comte and Durkheim who imagined that sociology can establish a scientific theory that of a natural science or foundation of morality which labours under an illusion, Pareto with the help of John Stuart Mill's methodology of 'logical action' used the assessment of the scientific character of the act of observing. Pareto therefore argued that the objective and the subjective ends will coincide in any particular instance so that the theory guiding the action subscribe to the logico-experimental standard of true science. There developed two paradigms as a framework: firstly, the 'subject' in social action was conceived by Pareto not only as 'knower', but also as actor; and secondly this actor-knower becomes the 'object' of observation by the social scientist himself. These two paradigms served to differentiate while holding together the action of observed objects and that of the action of the observer in his relations to these object (Morgan,1989:79-80).

Stop and Read

Logico-experimental method is based on observation, experiment and logic. Scientific theorists use this to test theories as the natural sciences and engineers do.
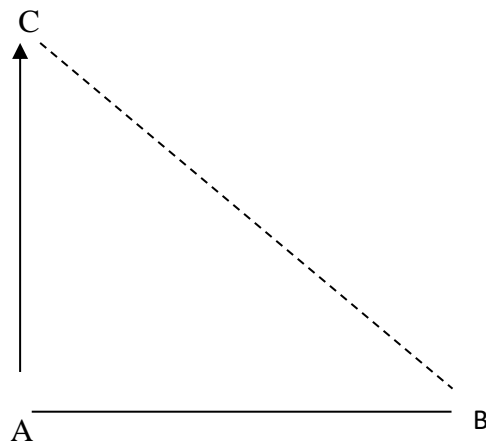

13.4.2 Logical and Non-logical Actions

Pareto defined logical actions as those that use means which are appropriate to ends and logically link means with ends. For an action to be logical, the logical connection between the means and end must exists both in the mind of the actor who performs the act and must be either objective (anybody having knowledge extending outside the action) or subjective (the person acting).

By non-logical action it is meant that all actions do not fall within the scope of logical rather some actions may be illogical. Such actions arise from a certain psychological state of feelings, sub-consciousness etc. Pareto finds a pre-given, stable and latent fact in the non-logical, which goes beyond any empirical explanation, conceptualized through deduction from the system of symbolic structures, known as *residues*, and on the other hand, a manifest and variable face which can be observed empirically, known as *derivation*.

In a general reflect, logical actions are those motivated by reasoning whereas, non-logical actions involve some degree of motivation by sentiment. Pareto in his definition of *logico-experimental method*, mentioned that science covers only a close domain of reality. The range of human behaviour is quite broad and logical behaviour can cover only a limited part of it. Thus, science cannot help us determine our goals. It is therefore pertinent that a greater part of the human behaviour is non-logical and merely focusing on the logical aspect is not enough. However, Pareto argued that men quite often fail in logical actions and tries to rationalise their behaviour, that is, to make it appear as the logical result of a set of ideas. In fact, what accounts for most action is not the set of beliefs that is used to rationalise, but rather a pre-existing state of mind, a basic human sentiment (Coser,1971:389).

For example, Suppose A is taken as human sentiments, B as theories relating to action and C as action itself-we can analyse that although A,

B, C are mutually analogous, A independently influences B and C far more than B influences C. To think it differently, B and C are non-logical theories and are clear, human sentiments or state of mind that can be deduced.

C

A   B

For Pareto, as non-logical action defines psychic states, sentiments and subconscious feelings, he was not prepared to analyse these basic sentiments, rather he left this task to psychologists and concentrated his attention on conduct that reflects the psychic states particularly, the theories and belief systems which serve to justify and rationalise non-logical action.

13.4.3 Residues and Derivations

Pareto formulated that the main reason of social action lies in the psychological bases of action. These bases explain both the action involved and theories that are advanced by social actors. Residues, according to Pareto are the bases of human activity, belief, attitude, feeling that regulate behaviour. For him, the term was used synonymously as well as interchangeably with intuition, need, motive and sentiment. He believes that residues are permanent elements of behaviour and lie between sentiments and concomitant action. (Abraham,1985:87). On the other hand, Pareto's theory of derivations

are logical justifications applied for rationalization of non-logical sentiment-driven actions. Pareto emphasized on the difference between human behaviour and its rationalistic explanation. It is believed that residues are the manifestations of sentiments. Pareto thought that residues are related to human instincts whereas derivations only appear when there is reasoning, argumentation and ideological justification of human action. He tried to understand that mere liking of Italian food is a matter of taste but developing theories of superiority of Italian cooking is a matter of derivations.

Diagram:

Derivations – theories/rationalizations
of action

Residues – psychological
bases of action

Observable
behaviour
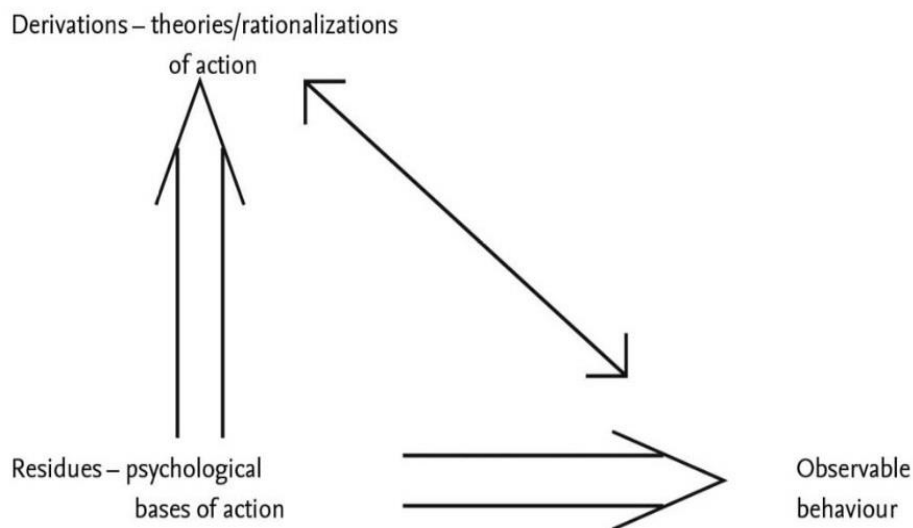
According to Pareto, residues are driving force arising from sentiments which are less deeply covered on the individual and are more on the exteriority. Analysis between ideas and behaviour of an individual can determine what s/he says and what s/he does. He examined it as a fundamental concept of sociology where the analysis of ideas belongs to the field of pure psychology. On the other hand, derivations are those that articulates what people think and explain. It includes an attempt to give a logical explanation for non-logical behaviour. Both the elements have their source in sentiments and instincts. The residues are the overt manifestations of basic human sentiments, and the derivations are the

verbal manifestations of the same sentiments. Pareto describes six classes of residues-a) instinct for combinations b) group persistence: persistence of aggregates c) need of expressing sentiments by external acts: activity, self-expression d) residues connected with sociality e) the residue of personal integrity leading to actions that restore lost integrity such as those forming the source of criminal law and f) the sexual residue. Such classification explains that human behaviour is structured, residues are not random affair, and there is an internal instinct to discover a kind of logic in the non –logico experimental action of men in the society. Similarly, there are four classes of derivations such as – a) derivation of assertion, including affirmations of facts and sentiments b) derivation of authority whether of individuals, groups, customs or divinities c) derivation that agrees with common sentiments and principles and d) derivation of verbal proof, such as in the form of metaphors and analogies. These elements lead to the development of non-scientific theories or rationalizations of human behaviour.

13.5 THE THEORY OF ELITE

Pareto's theory of elite is based on ideas which are unequal physically, intellectually and morally which for him have the value of axioms. It was only in the late 19th century the theory gained its importance in Europe and in 1930s it was developed in Britain and America in Pareto's writings. Pareto explained the term based on higher sections of people and lower sections of people, i.e. the elite and the non –elite; who play role in the government and who does not play any role.

13.5.1 Circulation of Elites

The term 'elite' signifies a class of the people who exercises superiority. Pareto argues that the elitist can be classified as governing elite and non-governing elite. The governing elite belong to the upper section and comprise of individuals that are engaged in any form of government. On

the other hand, non-governing elite belong to the lower section and they do not have role in the government. Governing elites are therefore associated directly and indirectly with administration. They play an important role in the society. Non-governing elites do not connect with administration rather occupy a place in society. It is to be noted that Pareto was greatly influenced by his predecessor Machiavelli. The influence of Machiavelli can be seen in his concept of elite theory too where he talks of two types of elite – the foxes and the lions. By the two terms 'foxes' and 'lions', you might have got some idea that while the former relates to cunningness, the latter to power and force. Thus, 'foxes' are the ones that rule the masses by use of cunningness, manipulation and deception. They are not much comfortable using force. Scepticism, decentralisation, and plurality characterise their rule. On the other hand, 'lions' rule the masses with the use of force. They are powerful and unlike the 'foxes', are comfortable with the use of force. Their rule is characterised by small, centralised and hierarchical bureaucracies or administrations. Now both the 'lions' and 'foxes' lack what the other has. To maintain its rule, the elite need cunningness which the lions lack and in order to make up for this deficiency foxes are to be admitted from the masses to. Similarly, in order to retain power, the ability to take forceful action becomes essential in several instances which the foxes lack. All these imply that because of what they lack, one form of elite that rules the masses degenerate over time and gets replaced by the other. It is to be noted here that the masses cannot replace the ruling elite. It is always the elite that dominates and governs the society. Thus, according to Pareto, there is a circulation of elites with 'lions' getting replaced by 'foxes' or vice versa.

13.6 SUMMING UP

From the above discussion, we may say that Pareto's conception of sociology brought a magnificent array of skills and interests in his

methodological orientation. He argued that the logico -experimental study of non-logical behaviour should be morally and politically neutral, and free of value judgements and sentiments. Also, his theory of elitism and circulation of elites perpetuated to inspire careful and critical investigation of the functional nature of the upper strata of government and classes. Lastly, the prime contributions are his instructions that sociology must be governed strictly by scientific rule and the concept of society as a system in imperfect equilibrium.

13.7 QUESTIONS

1. What does Pareto refer to his concept of Derivation?

2. Differentiate governing elite and non-governing elite.

3. Write a note on Circulation of elite.

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UNIT 14: SOCIOLOGY OF GEORG SIMMEL: SOCIAL TYPE

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 INTRODUCTION

By now you are already familiar with German thinkers who have contributed to the development of sociology. One of the early giants of mainstream German Sociology was Georg Simmel. In this Unit, you will learn about Simmel and his ideas and concepts relating to social theory. Simmel was a contemporary of Weber who was a cofounder of German Sociological Society. However, it may also be noted that he also had an immediate and profound effect on the development of sociological theory in America and his work had great influence in the development of the University of Chicago as well as the theory of symbolic interactionism. While Weber and Marx focused more on the large-scale issues like rationalization and capitalism, Simmel focused more on smaller scale issues like individual action and interaction and it is this approach that made him popular in America.

14.2 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit, you are expected to:

- Explain the ideas and concepts of Simmel that contributed to sociological thought;
- Distinguish Simmel's approach to sociology from the approaches of other classical thinkers.

14.3 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born on March 1, 1858, Georg Simmel was socialized within the German academic system. He was both a philosopher and a sociologist who possesses a catholic interest, breadth of knowledge, and felicity of writing style unsurpassed by any master of social theory of that time. He studied philosophy and history at the University of Berlin. He was interested in a wide range of subjects including anthropology, psychology, sociology and economics. Simmel created social theories and structural theories which would foster an approach to studying society and urban life in the form of the metropolis. His father was basically a businessman who died when Simmel was quite young. He was a Baptised Lutheran during his childhood, but Simmel abandoned his faith when he was a university student. Like many converts to agnosticism, he retained an intense interest in religion.

He was a recognised micro sociologist who worked in the development of symbolic interactionism, small-group research, and exchange theory. His work reflects that sociologists should study its underlying aspects and descriptions of social inter-relationships. Simmel comprehends sociology by examining it as small groups or units which made him distinct from the other pioneers.

Simmel received his doctoral dissertation on Immanuel Kant, winning a prize for excellence at the University of Berlin in 1881. He opted to teach philosophy, psychology and sociology courses both inside and outside

the University of Berlin. He was a brilliant public lecturer, who attracted numerous crowds not only of the university students but also professors and the cultured intelligentsia of Berlin. He married Gertrud in 1890, who was engaged in her own discipline and thought. At the age of forty-three, in 1901 he was promoted in the rank of *Ausserordentlicher professor* which was higher than a private tutor. Though he received the honorary title, he was still not allowed to take part in academic affairs. Despite his early successes in scholarship, Simmel's professional advancement was bafflingly inactive. He had faced problem at that time as he was treated in a cruel manner for being Jewish. As his wife was an erudite and a well-known writer in philosophy, their home became a gathering place for members of Berlin's intellectual elite. Very popular with the cultured intelligentsia and skilled in the ways of high society, Simmel never expressed bitterness over his lack or belated acceptance within the academia. Simmel was greatly influenced by Hegel and Kant. He shared some similarities with Durkheim (the notion of individual and society), Weber (effects of rationalization), and Marx (alienation). For Simmel, society has a network of interactions between and among individuals, and a sociologist tries to acknowledge its patterns and forms of associations. He considered the study of interactions as the primary task of sociology which makes his approach different from that of the classical writers, especially Durkheim and Marx. Simmel wrote widely throughout his career. With Ferdinand Tonnies and Max Weber, he co-founded the 'German Society for Sociology'. Eventually, Simmel was promoted to Professorship at the University of Strasbourg in 1914 at the age of fifty-six. Ironically, the university had to suspend the classes that year owing to the turmoil of war and tumult of political uncertainty. Before the university could re-establish once again, Simmel died of liver cancer on September 28, 1918, having never taught a class as a Professor of sociology at Strasbourg University.

14.4 SUBJECT MATTER OF SOCIOLOGY

Just like science has its own field of enquiry, sociology also has its organised structure. Though Simmel understood that the comparative method in the scientific analysis of group behaviour was the core ingredient in sociological methodology, he personally preferred to avoid large-scale analyses. The sociology of Georg Simmel has been concerned with the forms of association. He felt that by defining the subject matter of sociology, he would be able to make the field acceptable within the academic sphere. For him, sociology can be best understood as a gauche attempt where he rejected the organicist theories of Comte and Spencer. He did not see society as Durkheim's concept of 'social fact' that is, as a thing or as an organism in the aspect of Comte and Spencer, nor as a convenient label for something that did not have 'real' existence. He rather had a completely different view. According to him, society consists of a web of a multitude of relations between individuals who are constantly interacting with one another (Coser,1971:178).

Simmel distinguished three different forms of sociology:

(a) General sociology which studies social phenomenon or problem in developmental terms;

(b) Philosophical sociology which studies the philosophy of social sciences, the knowledge and theoretical understanding of society. For Simmel philosophy was a 'well-defined mode of treating any specific subject matter, which was characterized by receptiveness to the totality of being and at the same time expressive of a fundamental attitude or world orientation on the part of the philosophizing person' (Morgan,1985:141);

(c)Formal sociology implies that the comparative perspective becomes a constitutive element of his sociology.

14.4.1 Formal Sociology

Georg Simmel has been regarded as one of the founders of formal sociology. In his formal sociology, Simmel rejected the concept of society as the basic concept of sociology because it lacked precision and was a 'mystical' concept. Formal sociology is an approach which classifies and analyses patterns of interaction that differentiates between their form and their content. To him, both form and content idealise a conceptual tool, where the form is that component in social life which is relatively fixed and patterned, predictable and universally present; whereas content is conspicuously variable and differs from one place to another. The forms of interaction or social forms are abstract analytical aspects of social reality. They are not structured real entities. They might be formulated as basic structural configurations or structuring principles. The contents of interaction are their motive powers such as individual drives, purposes, interests etc. It was from the starting that Simmel argued with German idealists that the analysis of social forms is a permissible undertaking because it requires a systematic study of the actual structure of society. From a sociological perspective, what according to Simmel is important is not their uniqueness, but the uniformities underlying the phenomena of wars, revolutions and leadership. However, the form can be recognised by the task it performs. It has been suggested that Simmel's use of the term 'form' was inappropriate since it carried a rather weighty philosophical connotation which he did not intend. He felt that if he had involved the most used term 'social structure', he might very well manage amongst sociology peers. In his formal analysis of social phenomena, certain features of a concrete character are analytically extracted from sheer reality which is not readily visible unless such framework is applied to them. Simmel articulates that once this arises, it becomes possible to describe the phenomena that are feasibly dissimilar in specific content yet essentially similar in structural sequence.

14.4.2 Size of the Group

Simmel seeks to assimilate the analysis of individual's understanding through organised structures and scientific action. He started surveying the phenomena upside down. Also, he observes the minimal social relations between individuals while seeking how comprehensive institutions emerged from them. According to him, the size of the group as the determining factor in which social action takes places and the nature of the group is concerned with the form of the group, rather than the type of the interaction. Simmel is of the view that the interaction between two individuals which is known as a *dyad*, is very different from the interaction in a *triad* or a three-party relationship. According to Simmel, the dyad is the simplest sociological unit. In case of a dyad, a relationship can be considered relatively straightforward. Each individual can present herself/himself in a way that maintains her/his identity. Since it consists of only two individuals, one of them withdrawing from it is enough to end the relationship. The triad, on the other hand, is different from a dyad. Various strategies emerge in the *triad* which makes it distinct from the dyad. The strategies in the triad may lead to competition, alliances, or mediation, but are likely to develop a group structure independent of the individuals in it, whereas this can be found less likely in the dyad (Ritzer,1983:166). Simmel uses his mode of analysis of both dyad and triad not only to explain patterns of interaction in everyday life but also forms of political alliances, association of similar people, pressure groups etc.

14.4.3 Social Types

Simmel's invention was associated by a gallery of social types for analytical purposes. It is an understanding which has been pre-occupied from the basic components of a particular social relationship and involves the essential qualities of the person as well as her/his roles and statuses involved. With the help of 'stranger', he traced the diverse types of 'mediator', 'the adventurer', 'the poor', 'the miser', and 'the renegade'.

'The stranger' according to Simmel gets his position through his bonds with others, who have no structural position but is assigned a particular position and accordingly, he is expected to behave in certain specific ways. By this, he meant that his position is determined by the fact that he does not belong to it from the beginning and that he may leave it any time. For Simmel:

'*To be a stranger is naturally a very positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction. The stranger is an element of the group itself, while not being fully part of it. He is not radically committed to the unique ingredients and peculiar tendencies of the group, and therefore approaches them with the specific attitude of objectivity*'(Morgan,1985:146).

Similarly, the poor as a social type appears only when society recognizes poverty as a special status and allocates specific persons those requiring assistance to that category. Once the poor accept any support, they are removed from the pre-requisites of their earlier status. They are even declassified and their private issue becomes a public one. The poor can be viewed not by what comes today or what they do but by the virtue of what is done or stays tomorrow. Society creates the social type of the poor and assigns them a peculiar status that is marked only by negative attributes which the status-holders do not have (Coser,1971:183).

From the above mentioned, Simmel ascribes their position (the stranger and the poor) by virtue of specific interactive relations. They have a social formation and acts out of their allotted roles.

14.4.4 Subjective and Objective Culture
Georg Simmel was best known for his analysis of the *tragedy of culture*. This appeared in the journal, *Logos* in 1911. According to him, the mnemonic aspects of society such as signs, ideas, social forms etc., are created by people and the interactions between them exist independently of the individual and influences each other. In relation to the way of thinking, he categorised both subjective and objective culture. For

Simmel, subjective culture denotes 'the ability to embrace, use, and feel culture', the way in which we interact and express culture; whereas objective culture is made up of elements of culture created by individuals and groups which later becomes separated from them and takes on a life of its own. The tragedy of culture occurs when the growth of objective culture surpasses the growth of subjective culture. It is to be noted that there cannot be a subjective culture without an objective culture. It is only by the inclusion of objects that there can be subjective development. In other words, subjective culture shapes, and is shaped by objective culture. According to Simmel:

'*The elements of culture acquire fixed identities, a logic and lawfulness of their own; this new rigidity inevitably places them at a distance from the spiritual dynamic which created them and which makes them independent*'.

The process connected with the formation of objective and transcendence of subjective culture has a cultivating process. However, the objective culture maintains its position standing above and appearing independent of human existence. Though at the same time, these cultural forms are integrated into the subjective culture.

Stop and Read

Objective culture refers to those aspects that individuals produce whereas subjective culture talks about the things that have been worked in the past and is conveyed to future.

14.5 SUMMING UP

As mentioned above, Simmel was a cultured intellectual who enjoyed most of his life writing and exemplifying the qualities of educated purification. The temptation towards his work has been an influential one where his focus shifted from micro-sociology to general sociological

perspectives. He was one of the eminent writers who is regarded as similar to other theorists. Most of his writings got published in various journals, newspapers and magazines during his lifetime and few of his writings appeared after his death. Like another classical theorist, he talked less about social structure and its dynamics. He rather anticipated a general understanding of the objective and subjective culture where objective culture expands, and subjective culture becomes impoverished. He during his lifetime had to undergo criticism from Durkheim for his unnatural detachment of form and content. On the other hand, Weber was in support of Simmel for his ideas but criticised him because of his methodological understanding as according to Weber, the distinction between objective and subjective had no valid meanings. Despite all those criticism, he propounded his own sociological theory.

Glossary

1. Privatdozent: one who teaches but does not get any pay from any individual or institute.
2. Ausserordentlicher: one who teaches and is ranked higher than the private tutor.
3. Formal Sociology: looking at the patterns of relationships among individuals, their forms and content.
4. Dyad: consisting of two elements.
5. Triad: consisting of three elements.
6. Objective culture: it is what can be experimented by ideas or senses.
7. Subjective Culture: it is what the actor tries to construct and assimilate from the components of objective culture.

14.6 QUESTIONS

1. Explain about the understanding of formal sociology.

2. What does Simmel refer by the size of the group?

3. Discuss the understanding of objective and subjective culture.

14.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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