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SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

BSOC-133

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

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Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note : Attempt any five questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. Describe the materialist perspective of Karl Marx.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 3, 'Materialist Perspective'.

Q. 2. Discuss the historical dialectical materialism of Marx in comparison with Hegel's dialectics.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 13, 'The Concept of Dialectics', 'Laws of Dialectics'.

Q. 3. Discuss the views of Karl Marx on social revolution.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 16, 'Social Change and Revolution'.

Q. 4. Discuss the intellectual influences that have shaped Durkheim's works.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 42, 'Intellectual Influences on Durkheim's Works'.

Q. 5. How did Durkheim try to establish sociology as a science? Discuss.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 56, 'General Conditions for the Establishment of Social Science'.

Q. 6. What is social solidarity? Distinguish between mechanical and organic solidarity.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 75, Q. No. 1, Page No. 77, Q. No. 3.

Q. 7. Describe the intellectual influences on Max Weber's work.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 81, 'Intellectual Influences'.

Q. 8. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Concept of class.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 26, 'The Class Structure'.

(b) Social fact.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 57, 'Social Facts'.

(c) Ideal types.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 96, 'Ideal Types: Meaning, Construction and Characteristics'.

(d) Division of labour.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 134, 'Division of Labour'.



QUESTION PAPER

December – 2023

(Solved)

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

BSOC-133

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note : Attempt any five questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. Discuss Marx's view on social change and revolution.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 16, 'Social Change and Revolution'.

Q. 2. Explain the influence of positivism Durkheim's ideas.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 43, 'Scientism and Influence of Positivism', Page No. 45, Q. No. 1.

Q. 3. Discuss Durkheim's perspective on religion with reference to the study on totemism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 123, 'Durkheim's Perspective', 'Study of Totemism'.

Q. 4. Explain the concept of authority. In what way does it differ from power?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 108, 'Power and Authority'.

Q. 5. "Economic activity and economic structure is the basis of social life." Discuss with reference to the viewpoint of Marx.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 137, 'Marx's Views on Capitalism'.

Q. 6. Discuss Marx's view on political economy.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 4, 'Political Economy Perspective'.

Q. 7. Compare Marx's and Weber's views on class.

Ans. Karl Marx and Max Weber had different ideas about class, including: "Class determination" Marx believed that class was determined by economic factors, while Weber believed that social stratification was more complex and involved multiple dimensions. "Class structure" Marx's theory of class struggle focused on two main classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Weber's theory included three independent factors: class, status, and power. "Non-economic factors" Marx focused primarily on economic relations, while Weber emphasized the importance of non-economic factors like prestige and political power. "Class conflict" Marx viewed class conflict as the primary driver of social change, while Weber's theory allowed for a more complex interplay between various dimensions of

stratification. "Middle class" Weber recognized the significance of the middle class and its potential for social mobility, which Marx's binary class model did not adequately address. "Revolution" Marxian theory predicts a revolution and the establishment of a classless society, whereas Weberian theory acknowledges continuous struggles and changes within a complex stratification system.

Q. 8. Write short notes on the following:

(i) Rationalisation.

Ans. Rationalism is a philosophical belief that reason is the primary source of knowledge, and that people can access and understand certain truths without sensory experience: "Rationalism is the idea that reason is the best way to test knowledge, and that there are certain truths that people can access without sensory experience. "Rationalism differs from empiricism, which argues that all knowledge comes from experiences. "Rationalism suggests that some knowledge is innate, rather than learned through experience. "Rationalists believe that reality has an inherently logical structure, and that the intellect can grasp certain truths directly. "Rationalists believe that certain rational principles are fundamental, and that denying them leads to contradiction. "Rationalism was a major intellectual movement during the Enlightenment. René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, and Gottfried Leibniz were all proponents of rationalism. "Deism was a religious movement influenced by rationalism. Deists believed that God created the universe, and that people could determine God's existence and other religious truths by observing nature.

(ii) Organic solidarity.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 133, 'Organic Solidarity'.

(iii) Ideal types.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 96, 'Ideal Types: Meaning, Construction and Characteristics'.

(iv) Dehumanisation of the working class.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 135, 'Dehumanisation of the Working Class'.



Sample Preview of The Chapter

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SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

Philosophical Foundations of Karl Marx's Work



INTRODUCTION

Karl Marx was a German philosopher who wrote on a number of themes like capitalist mode of production, class and class conflict, political economy, alienation and many others. These writings have made us aware in the disciplines of economics, history, and political science and of course sociology. This chapter deals in the biographical outline of Karl Marx and creates awareness about the social, economic and political environment in which his ideas developed. After that we will examine the specific intellectual ideas that influenced him and then understand some important ideas in his writings.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF KARL MARX

Biographical Sketch

The life of Karl Marx can be divided into five phases which are as follows:

Early Years

Heinrich and Henrietta Marx were the parents of Karl Heinrich Marx who was born on the 5th May, 1818, in Trier, in the German Rhineland. Heinrich Marx practiced law and belonged to the small but widely dispersed Jewish community of Germany. During this period, the Napoleon ruled Germany and the Jews had taken advantage of the opening of trades and professions which were previously barricaded to them. There were many Jewish families who had departed from their traditional style of life. After Napoleon was defeated in 1828, the Congress of Vienna assigned the German Rhineland to the Prussian Kingdom and Germany was again divided into feudally organized kingdoms. The Jews suffered racial, political and religious barriers once

again. Some of them could not track their path and Karl Marx's father was also one of them. In the year 1817, Heinrich became a member of the Christian Church. This was one year before Karl Marx's birth. The hostile attitude of Karl Marx to religion may well be partly due to the peculiar and embarrassed situation in which such converts sometimes found them. Karl Marx joined the University of Bonn as a student in the faculty of law and in 1836 he was transferred to the University of Berlin.

Berlin Days

Karl Marx was influenced with the Hegelian philosophy in the University of Berlin and became a part of the group known as Young Hegelians. Karl Marx attended the lectures of Eduard Gans, who was one of Hegel's favourite disciples and from their Marx learnt the method of theoretical criticism. He also learnt the legitimate field for applying and verifying every type of philosophy of history. The young Marx tried and constructed a rival system of Hegelian ideas of positivism. After that Marx gave up his studies of law and immersed himself in philosophy. Karl Marx was helped by a Cologne publicist, Moses Hess who helped him to write articles for a journal (Rheinische Zeitung). Karl Marx became its chief editor. He moved to France when he learnt that he could not speak and write freely in Germany and then in 1843 after his marriage he left for Paris.

In Paris

At the time when Karl Marx arrived in Paris, the French capital mirrored the unparalleled phenomenon of socio-economic, political and cultural upheaval in Europe. Karl Marx was concerned about the failure of the French Revolution. He researched about the historical records of the revolution and also the works written in France on the related subjects. He did a lot

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of work on this day and night and his works included comparing the socio-economic conditions of France and Germany. Karl Marx was very critical of Hegelianism but accepted Hegel's view of the structure i.e., in the fact of formal relations between the elements of the process of human history. The critique of Hegel provided Karl Marx a basis for creating a new outlook and a plan of action. This was also the time when he met in Paris a revolutionary by the name of Friedrich Engels, who was a German radical and son of cotton manufacturer and from their began a long lasting phase of friend and partnership between them. Karl Marx learnt a lot from Engels who had a remarkable capacity 'for shifting, assessing and perceiving the practical applicability of the discoveries of others' (Berlin 1939: 100). Marx was expelled from Paris in 1845 when comments against the ruling Prussian King had appeared in the socialist journal, Vorwärts and the Prussian authorities had demanded expulsion of the entire group connected with these activities.

Karl Marx left Paris for Brussels with Engels and his wife and one-year-old daughter. Karl Marx decided to set up an international organization of workers which marked the beginning of the period when the scholar Marx turned into a visionary of revolution.

Revolutionary Marx

Karl Marx became the leader of a revolutionary party while working with the Communist League, a federation of workers. The London branch of the Communist League endowed him with writing of a document in the year which would spell aims and objectives of the party which was presented by Karl Marx early in 1848. The document was called the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) and after that Karl Marx and his family were expelled from Belgium and its territory. Then, he was invited back to Paris by the new French Government. Marx once again left Paris and went to Cologne to find out what he could do to promote his idea in his native Rhineland.

The new journal started by Marx was named as 'The New Rheinische Zeitung' which was read avidly by the public. But then Marx was arrested for sedition and tried in Cologne court where he delivered a speech on socio-economic conditions in Germany and other countries. The jury thanked him but the Government had already taken away his citizenship and therefore he was dismissed from Rhineland in July 1849. He again went to Paris where the French Government ordered him to either leave France or to retire to the obscurity.

Exile

Karl Marx came to England and arrived in London in August 1849 with the help of his friends. His family joined him after a month and Engels also arrived in London in November. Marx lived there until his death in 1883. In England Marx was isolated and cut off from the ferment of intellectual and political activity and led a life of relative inactivity and material poverty which helped him to develop as a thinker.

Marx joined the executive committee of Worker's International in the year 1864 and took charge of the organization and delivered its Inaugural Address, which contained a socio-economic survey of the working class from 1848 to 1864. Marx controlled its activities from London and published the first volume of *Das Kapital*, his magnum, opus in the year 1867. Engels was the one who edited the second and third volumes of this treatise after Marx's death. Russia welcomed the ideas of Marx's writings and speeches and the Russians visited him in London. He welcomed them and talked about his mission in life which was to overthrow the capitalist society. Russian revolutionaries were inspired by him. After a prolonged illness of lungs, his health failed and he died in his sleep on 14th March, 1883.

SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There were many economic changes in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries which particularly affected England. The main reason of the changes was the introduction of an industrial economy due to which the earlier form of feudal society underwent significant changes. There was a shift from the feudalism to capitalism. This also led to the decline in the influence of trade guilds which gave more space to the capitalist expansion in the economy of that time. This impacted the European society. The rapid industrialization and dreadful working situations of the industrial workers (working class) led to wide spread poverty and social distress among them. All these influenced Marx very much and the economic questions and economic problems were communicated in his numerous writings. *The Condition of the Working Class* by Engels influenced him in England in 1844 which made him aware of the nature and extent of misery of industrial workers. Both Marx and Engels developed their philosophy of communism and became the intellectual leaders of the working-class movement and renamed the group the Communist League and began writing a manifesto summarizing the doctrines of the League.

The Communist Manifesto was written by Marx in January 1848 in which the following historic statement was made:

‘The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of the world, unite!’ The emergence and gradual consolidation of industrial capitalism made him more aware and articulate towards critiquing the exploitative system.

INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

There were many intellectual ideas that influenced the work of Marx which is explained in the following section:

German Philosophy and Idealism

Marx was influenced by the German Philosophy and Idealism specifically with the works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach. The ideas of Hegel can be located in the broad framework of idealist philosophy which stressed on the ideas i.e., reason for the understanding of social change. Hegel also focused on dialectics in terms of three elements: thesis which is the dominant form of ideas prevalent in society at any given point of time which are perceived to be ‘true’ and antithesis which is the contrary set of ideas which are formulated over a period of time and synthesis – the thesis and antithesis reconcile in the form of synthesis which serves as thesis.

Hegel’s idea of dialectics was also welcomed by Marx but did not agree with the emphasis on ideas. He brought in material forces instead of ideas and developed the idea of dialectical materialism. He also studied the dialectical relationship between capitalists and the proletariat and traced the dialectical history of changes in society from primitive through feudal to capitalist society. The dialectical approach considers that various aspects of society are in constant conflict with each other and Marx analysed the contradiction between capitalists and the proletariat. The writings of Ludwig Feuerbach who was a German Philosopher also influenced Marx. Hegel maintained that ‘real man’ emanates from the divine; Feuerbach said that ‘real man’ is one living in the ‘real, material world’. Feuerbach believed that human beings create an image of God to which they ascribe ideal qualities that they cannot attain. The human beings strive to be like God but this is not possible and during the process they are not able to appreciate human qualities and in this sense suffer from religious alienation. The ideas of

Feuerbach’s on the emphasis on material bases of religion attracted Marx who believed that Feuerbach should have related religious alienation with economic activity. Marx believed that alienation emerged from social and economic activities of human beings and elaborated it in his own materialist perspective and stated that religion is the handiwork of those who are rich class i.e. own the means of production and politically powerful.

Materialist Perspective

The central theme of Marx’s analysis of society is materialist perspective. The meaning of materialism is described in the box below:

Box 1.1 Materialism

“There is a scientific explanation of things, including even religion and materialism also seeks the same. The idea of materialism may be opposed to the concept of idealism. Idealism mentions about a theory which states that ultimate reality lies in a realm of transcending phenomena. On the other hand, materialism withstand that everything, that exists, depends upon matter. There are three kinds of materialism: philosophical materialism, scientific materialism and historical materialism. The emphasis of historical materialism is on the fundamental and causal role of production of material conditions in the development of human history. Marx traced historical events in the light of materialistic understanding of reality”.

Marx believed that the structure and development of society is based on the material conditions or economic factors of that society. Marx believed that materialism can be compared and contrasted with Idealism which is much associated with Hegel. Idealism is based on a theory that ultimate reality can be understood and interpreted through ideas and Materialism believes that everything, that exists, depends upon matter. Both the perspectives are bi-polar in nature and one gives importance to the idea and the other to the material conditions of existence. The general ideas of Marx about the society are known as his theory of historical materialism which is described in the box below:

Box 1.2 Historical Materialism

The theory of historical materialism consists of the 'Marx's general ideas about society'. Marx believed that material conditions or economic factors affect the structure and development of society and said that the material conditions essentially consists of technological means of production and human society is formed by the forces and relations of production. [...]. Marx's theory of society, i.e., historical materialism is historical because Marx has uncovered the evolution of human societies from one stage to another and is called materialistic because Marx has interpreted the evolution of societies in terms of their material or economic bases. [...]

Friedrich Engels believed that the theory of historical materialism was discovered by Karl Marx and Marx thought it was Friedrich Engels who had conceived the materialist formulation of history independently”

Some of the major beliefs of historical materialism are as follows: (i) the most important is the economic structure of society (ii) politics and culture in society are determined by the economic structure (iii) economic structure determine political and legal superstructure rather than ideas. Historical materialism is a materialist explanation of social, cultural and political phenomena. The historical materialism theory is both historical and material in nature. The historical nature of the theory is because Marx has traced the evolution of human societies from one stage to another and is materialistic in nature because he has expounded the evolution of societies in terms of changes in their material or economic bases. The evolutionary perspective of the theory believes that the history of society is seen through the successive stages of evolution.

Marx defined the theory of historical materialism in 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and believed that 'It is not the consciousness of men, therefore, that determines their existence, but instead their social existence determines their consciousness.' He added that the superstructure of society is built on relations of production. The other attributes of society are history, politics, law, religion and education which are influenced by the economic structure.

According to Marx, there are four modes of production of the stages of human history: the Asiatic,

Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. He believed that ancient, feudal and capitalist modes of production followed each other one after the other in western societies. The societies in which ownership of land is communal, kinship relations predominate, and production process and labour are controlled by the State, the Asiatic mode of production is prevalent and said that the capitalist mode of production will be followed by socialism/communism. The ancient mode of production is marked by slavery and the feudal mode of production is marked by serfdom and capitalist (bourgeois) mode of production is identified by wage earning.

Karl Marx

Box 1.3 Historical Materialism is not Economic Determinism

“It is possible that you may contemplate Marx as an advocate of economic determinism or the view that economic conditions determine the development of society. But here you will see how historical materialism is different from economic determinism. Marx acknowledged that without culture there can be no production possible and believed that mode of production includes social relations of production which are relations of domination and subordination into which men and women are born or involuntarily enter. In order to understand the reproduction both of life and of the material means of life, it is important to turn to the culture, norms and the rituals of the working people over whom the rulers rule. The understanding of working class culture helps in understanding of the mode of production.

Class is a category that narrates people in relationships over time and the ways in which they become conscious of these relationships and also the ways in which they separate, unite, enter into struggle, form institutions and transmit values in class ways. Class is an 'economic' and also a 'cultural' formation. It is impossible to reduce class into a pure economic category”.

Political Economy Perspective

Let us first understand the concept of 'political economy'. The political economy mentions the interface between politics and economy which here are treated as inseparable from each other. The objective of political economy is on the questions like how do politics and policies influence economic outcomes (e.g., economic growth, trade, employment, income inequality across different sections of society and regions)?