

## The Origins of Sociology

Three major social changes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are important to the development of sociology.

- Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: **A New Industrial Economy** (Industrial Revolution): Rapid technological changes of the eighteenth century brought people in great numbers to work in factories. This change in the system of production weakened cultural traditions.
- **Political Change:** Traditional notions of Divine Law were being replaced by ideas of *individual liberty* and *individual rights*. The views of Auguste Comte and Karl Marx are discussed in terms of how each understood this change.
  - The French Revolution symbolized this dramatic break with political and social tradition.
- **The Growth of Cities:** Factories drew people in from the countryside.
- Mid-twentieth century: **Postindustrial age** growth of the service sector, bureaucracies.
- Twenty-first century: **Information age** computer technology effects on individuals and society.

## Founders of Sociology

**Aguste Comte:** Lived 1798-1857

System of Positive Polity, or Treatise on Sociology, Instituting the Religion of Humanity.

- Believed that the major goal of sociology was to understand society as it actually operates.
- Comte favored **positivism**—a way of understanding based on science.
- Comte saw sociology as the product of a three-stage historical development:
  - The theological stage, in which thought was guided by religion.
  - The metaphysical stage, a transitional phase.
  - The scientific stage

**Emile Durkheim Lived 1858-1917**

- The Division of Labor in Society Influential French sociologist, educator, and public official. Studied the ties that bind society together
  - The Elementary Forms of Religious Life

- Suicide

**Mechanical solidarity** - Traditional societies are united by social similarities (society people behave and think alike and more or less perform the same work tasks and have the same group-oriented goals.)

Societies evolved from a simple, nonspecialized form toward a highly complex, specialized form, called organic

**Organic solidarity** - Modern societies are united by interdependence (Societies become more complex, or organic, work also becomes more complex. In this society, people are no longer tied to one another and social bonds are impersonal.)

**Anomie** – (The Division of Labor in Society, published in 1893) Rapid social change leads to loss of social norms and produces many social problems. (Breakdown of social norms and it a condition where norms no longer control the activities of members in society. Individuals cannot find their place in society without clear rules to help guide them. Changing conditions as well as adjustment of life leads to dissatisfaction, conflict, and deviance. He observed that social periods of disruption (economic depression, for instance) brought about greater anomie and higher rates of crime, suicide, and deviance.)

**Karl Marx -Lived 1818-1883** *Das Kapital*

- German philosopher Writer and social critic
- Personally involved in social change
- Believed social scientists should help to improve society
- Struggle between owners and workers
- Capitalist owners will oppress ordinary people
- Eventually, people become alienated
- People lose control over their lives

**Max Weber -Lived 1864-1920**

- German scholar who studied wide variety of topics
- Like other peers, he studied the impact of industrialization on peoples' lives
- Support for value free studies and objective research

- The Protestant Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism
- The Sociology of Religion
- The theory of Social and Economic organization
- **Rationalization**
  - Traditional societies emphasize emotion and personal ties
  - Modern societies emphasize calculation, efficiency, self control
  - Personal ties decline and people become “disenchanted”

### **Harriet Martineau: Feminist and Methodologist**

- Studied social life in Britain and US, translated Comte. Studied the impact of inequality

### **Herbert Spencer and Social Darwinism**

- An evolutionary model of society, known for “social Darwinism” but thought that attempts at social reform was wrong.

### **American Sociology**

Sociology emerged in the United States as an academic discipline during the early twentieth century. Early American sociology was optimistic, forward-looking, and rooted in a belief in progress, the value of individual freedom and welfare

An exception to such optimism is the work of **W.E.B. DuBois**, who took sociology out of the ivory tower and did investigative fieldwork.

Contributions of considerable significance to sociology were also made by sociologists at the University of Chicago, where the first department of sociology in the United States was established in 1892.

Dominated sociology for the first half of the 20th century

Noted for study of urban problems and cities

### **W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963)**

Combined emphasis on analysis of everyday lived experience with commitment to investigating power and inequality based on race

Revealed social processes that contributed to maintenance of racial separation

**Ida Wells-Barnett (1862–1931)** An early feminist

Argued that societies can be judged on whether the principles they claim to believe in match their actions Used her analysis of society to resist oppression

**Talcott Parsons (1902-1979)** AGIL system:

1. The adaptive function, whereby a system adapts to its environment.
2. The goal-attainment function, i.e., how a system defines and achieves its goals.
3. The integrative function or the regulation of the components of the system.
4. Latency, or pattern maintenance function, i.e., how motivation and the dimensions of culture that create and sustain motivation are stimulated.