

presiding deity. Each god had some definite function and his scope and area of action was determined.

Auguste Comte and
Herbert Spencer

Monotheism: The last and most developed form of theological state is seen manifested in *monotheism*. As the very term monotheism implies, at this level of human thinking a belief in one god had replaced the earlier belief in many gods. The monotheistic thinking symbolizes the victory of human intellect and reason over non-intellectual and irrational thinking. In monotheism, it is believed that one God is supreme and that he is responsible for the maintenance of order and system in the world.

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2.2.2.2 Metaphysical or abstract state

The metaphysical or abstract thinking marks the second stage in the evolution of human mind. According to Comte, each successive stage is an improvement upon the earlier stage. With the gradual improvement in human mind, human problems also become more intricate. The theological state was not adequate to tackle these improvements efficiently. The appearance of conflicting and opposite forces in the world presented problems which could not be successfully tackled by monotheism. It was difficult to believe that the same god was responsible for prehistoric creation as well as destruction. A single god could not account for simultaneous creation and destruction. In order to resolve this intellectual query, metaphysical thinking was developed. Under metaphysical thinking, people believe that an abstract power or force guides and determines the events in the world. Metaphysical mind disregards belief in the presence of several gods.

2.2.2.3 Scientific or positive state

This state is the most advanced and developed form of the human mind. All metaphysical knowledge is based upon speculation and is at best inferential knowledge. There are no direct means to confirm the findings of metaphysical knowledge; it is purely a matter of belief or temperament. The modern temperament of man is such that it cannot remain satisfied with mere guesswork; it craves for positive knowledge which can be scientifically confirmed. The positive and scientific knowledge is based upon facts, and these facts are gathered by observation and experience. The observation and classification of facts are the beginning of scientific knowledge. From these facts we generalize and draw conclusions. These conclusions, in turn, are subjected to verification. Once verified, these become established laws, which can be relied upon in gathering and classifying the facts. Scientific thinking is thoroughly rational and in it there is no place for any belief or superstition. According to Comte, the human mind before reaching the state of positivism, must have passed through the two earlier stages of theological and metaphysical states.

The three stages suggested by Comte have a strong idealistic basis. Yet he correlated every stage of evolution of the human mind with social organizations present in that period. The theological stage that corresponds roughly with the

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ancient age is dominated by the rule of the army and priests. In the metaphysical state, society was dominated by clergy and lawyers. This state roughly falls during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The modern era marks the beginning of the positive state and is generally ruled by industrialists and scientific moral guides. In the first state, the family takes centrestage, while in the second, the State rises to prominence. In the third state, however, the entire civilization has become an operative social unit.

2.3 HIERARCHY OF SCIENCES

The hierarchy of sciences is another theory posited by Comte that gained importance in the realm of sociology. This theory is related closely to the law of the three stages. As mankind moves on from one stage to another, evolving from the knowledge of every step, similarly, scientific knowledge also pass from one stage to the next, evolving in every step, though at a different rate. 'Any kind of knowledge reaches the positive stage early in proportion to its generality, simplicity, and independence of other departments.'² Thus, we notice that astrology, which is the most simple and general type of all natural sciences, developed first and was followed by chemistry, biology and physics. Sociology comes last in this list of sciences. The evolution and development of the sciences depended upon the developments of the sciences that came before it in a hierarchy marked by the law of increasing complexity.

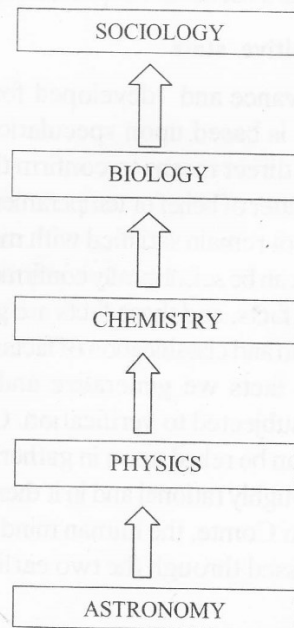


Fig. 2.1 Hierarchy of Science

² Ibid.

The most independent and complex of all sciences are the social sciences. These developed after the other distinct sciences emerged and definitely helped in the completion of the modern, positive method. The sciences that evolved prior to the social sciences had just prepared the groundwork. The general sense of the natural law developed through the social sciences. This was possible as social science employs all the resources that physical sciences did, and also uses the historical method which investigate by gradual filtration, unlike other methods that investigate by comparison. The chief phenomenon in sociology that is the gradual and continuous influence of generations upon each other would be misguided or unnoticed for want of the necessary key historical analysis.³ Sociology, like all other later sciences, also depended on the special methodological characteristics. It mostly depended on biology which, in turn, developed from the study of organic wholes. Sociology also shared this emphasis on organic unity with biology. If the society is divided into parts, sociology will fail to study it. The society can only be studied when it is treated as a whole consisting of various sub-parts. The parts of this whole are, however, treated by physical sciences better than by sociology.

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2.4 SOCIAL STATICS AND DYNAMICS

According to Comte, sociology is a wide discipline. In order to study the discipline, he divided it into two parts. These are: social statics and social dynamics.

1. **Social statics:** Social statics is concerned with the present structure of the society. It studies the current laws, rules and present condition of the society.
2. **Social dynamics:** Social dynamics observed as to how the present social laws are affecting the society. It also evaluates the social structure. Social dynamics also studies the correlation between various social facts. Social statics is the distinction between two aspects of theory and not between two class of facts.

The distinction between social statics and dynamics is not between two class of facts but between two aspects of theory. These are akin to order and progress. Order helps maintain peace and harmony across a community while progress is the social development. Thus, these four aspects, *statics*, *dynamics*, *order* and *progress* are related to each other. Social statics analyses social structure at a given moment. This helps in the understanding of the nature of social order. On the other hand, social dynamics describes the successive and necessary stages in the development of mind and society. Social dynamics is a science which discovers the laws and principles underlying social change and progress. It also tries to find out the conditions necessary to maintain the continuity of social progress. We have to study the rule and principle of social change in a historical perspective. Comte maintained that the laws of actions and reactions of the various sub-parts of a social system are analysed by a statical study of sociology. Statics also studies the fundamental laws of progress that influence and modify social growth. It studies the relations between the constituent elements of a social infrastructure. There

³ Comte. *Positive Philosophy*

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must always be a 'spontaneous harmony between the whole and the parts of the social system'.⁴ While analysing the component of the social system, Comte did not focus on *individuals* as elementary parts. He argues that science discourages us to take society as constituting of individuals. Instead, we need to treat family as the smallest unit, or at the most, a couple that forms the foundation of a society. Thus, families gradually grow to become clans or tribes and then tribes grow into nation-states. Family is thus the basis of all other human associations, for these evolved from family and kinship groups. He also argues that the classes and castes which form the basic tissues of the social systems, cities and towns are the integral organs. Comte maintained that the law of three stages and progress theories constitute social dynamics. While the laws of coexistence in a society are examined by social statics, the rules of succession are studied by social dynamics. The two combine to fulfil the needs of study of the modern society. He assigned prime importance to religion and language as serving as the vessels wherein the culture, nature and thoughts of our ancestors are held. As we participate in the linguistic universe, we are part of a linguistic community. We relate to each other as we understand each other's language; without this collective tool, maintaining a social order is completely impossible.

In addition to a common language, a common religion is also essential to stabilize a social order. Religion permits men to love their fellow men and to overcome their egos. It is a strong bond that holds a society together in a common cult and common system of beliefs. Religion is the base of social order. The third factor that binds men is the division of labour. According to Comte, men who share the same type of labour, form a fraternity. The extent of this division of labour leads to social complexities and complications. The system of division of labour bonded people together as they were dependent on others for the completion of their work. On the other hand, this same system promoted and nurtured the growth of capitalism and materialism. Social institutions like religion, language and division of labour, according to Comte, are not important in their own accord; rather, the contributions of these institutions in furtherance of social development are more important for sociologists. The parts and the whole of a social system need to be connected harmoniously. Political institutions, social manners, laws and rules need to be consolidated in order to develop humanity.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. When was Comte born?
2. How was his early life?
3. List a few definite sciences.
4. What are the scientific techniques that have to be used in order to take sociology towards becoming a definite science?
5. What are the stages through which the human mind needs to pass?

⁴ Ibid.

2.5 HERBERT SPENCER (1820–1903)

Herbert Spencer was born in Derby, England on 27 April 1820. He was the only one of the nine children in his family to survive infancy. His father was a teacher of mathematics and science but, ironically, did not hold this institutional enterprise in very high esteem and, along with Spencer's uncle, taught the young Herbert at home. He thus received formal training only in mathematics and physics.

Given his scientific inclinations, Spencer procured a job as engineer for the London and Birmingham Railroad, eventually becoming its chief engineer but later resigning to edit a magazine called the *Economist*. His first major publication was an article in the *Nonconformist* entitled 'The Proper Sphere of Government', a sphere which Spencer decided was extremely limited. In 1853 he gave up his job. In 1862, Spencer's first book, *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy* was published. In 1867 was published the multi-volume work called *Principles of Biology*. Another multi-volume work, *Principles of Psychology*, was published in 1872 followed by *Principles of Sociology* in 1896. His eight-volume study on descriptive sociology was published during 1873–1894. In 1873 was published his highly acclaimed book, *the Study of Sociology*.

Spencer believed that the knowledge of society is a science and can be achieved only by scientific methods. While analysing his theory of evolution, Spencer divided the Universe into two segments: Known and Unknown. The segment of Unknown relates to religion and its subject matter is God and Soul. The Unknown has nothing to do with science, it is beyond the realm of science and irrelevant to science. Science pertains to the segment called Known. According to Spencer, science also tries to explain the origin of the matter and understand the laws governing its evolution, growth and development. Spencer was of the view that the rules and laws governing evolution in the physical world also apply to society. In order to understand the law of social evolution, it is necessary to understand the laws of physical evolution. Spencer believed that society has characteristics of a science. The science of sociology is super organic. Society is the science concerned exclusively with the phenomena resulting from the cooperation of citizens.

2.6 SOCIAL EVOLUTION

In fact, much of Spencer's thought is evolutionary in character. For Spencer, not only biological species or societies evolve, but all matter, being highly unstable in its simplest forms, tend to differentiate and become more complex. Spencer proposed a theory of general evolution, according to which matter passes from a relatively indefinite homogeneity to a relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity. Biological species tend to evolve in such a way as to become more complex (i.e., to differentiate internally, to have interrelated, specialized parts). This also holds true for individual species, similarly for super-organic entities like societies.

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Societies evolve by adapting internally and externally. In Spencer's scheme, there is a continuous evolution from militant to industrial societies. Militant societies, nearer to the beginning of the evolutionary process, were concerned mainly with issues of offense and defense. Industrial societies tend to be mainly concerned with the production of goods.

The evolution of species or societies, for Spencer, is a matter of the 'survival of the fittest'. Darwin's term for this notion is 'natural selection', and he was later to suggest that he actually preferred Spencer's phrase. According to this notion, evolutionary processes filter out unfit species. The eventual outcome of this process, for Spencer, is a better, even *morally perfect* civilization. Since he viewed this outcome as the result of a natural process, he was adamant about his laissez-faire or non-intervention policy. Adaptation is key in this process; individuals or species should not, in his view, be helped in any way, lest a weak or unfit species continue to exist and thus weaken the whole. While species and societies evolved according to laws of their own, there is a supremely individualist assumption in Spencer's view. The perfection of civilization demands the perfection of the social atom, the individual human.

Spencer's primary concern was the changes that evolution brought in the social structure and social institutions. He was not bothered with the accompanying mental states of mankind. Evolution is that 'change from a state of relatively indefinite, incoherent, homogeneity to a state of relatively definite, coherent, heterogeneity',⁵ was to Spencer that universal process, which explains alike both the 'earliest changes which the universe at large is supposed to have undergone and those latest changes which we trace in society and products of social life'.⁶ Spencer maintained that the evolution of mankind and human societies were only a part of the natural law that could be applied to all living beings in this universe. Sociology can become a science only when it is based on the idea of natural, evolutionary law. 'There can be no complete acceptance of sociology as a science so long as the belief in a social order of conforming to natural law, survives.'⁷ He put forward the theory that like physical evolution, in social evolution also there is a movement from simple to complex. The society is gradually moving from homogenous structure to heterogeneous structure. Besides, society is also moving from indefinite state to definite state.

The progression from complex to simple is a part of universal change. This is manifested in geological, climatic, as well as organic changes on the Earth's surface. This universal phenomenon may be noticed in the growth of any individual organism, the culmination of all races coming together, or even the evolution of the basic social structure. The movement from simplicity to complexity is present in the evolution of the religious, political and economic aspects of the social progress. All concrete and abstract human activity bears witness to this universal movement.

⁵ Spencer, H. 'The Evolution of Society selection from Herbert Spencer *Principle of Sociology*.

⁶ Spencer, H. *First Principle*.

⁷ Spencer, H. *The Study of Sociology*.

The advance from the simple to the complex through a process of successive differentiations is seen alike in the earliest changes of the Universe. It is seen in the geologic and climatic evolution of the Earth; it is seen in the unfolding of every single organism on its surface; it is seen in the evolution of humanity, whether contemplated in the civilized individual, or in the aggregate of races; it is seen in the evolution of society in respect of its political, its religious and its economic organization; and it is seen in the evolution of all those endless concrete and abstract products of human activity.

According to Spencer, the theory of social evolution is divided into two stages. These are:

- (i) The movement from simple to compound societies
- (ii) Change from military to industrial society

(i) The movement from simple to compound societies

This evolutionary stage is seen in the following four types of societies in terms of evolutionary levels; simple society, compound society, Doubly compound society, triple compound society.

- (a) **Simple societies:** This is the most primitive society without any complexities and consisting of several families.
- (b) **Compound societies:** This society is basically a clan society, which means many simple societies make up this compound society.
- (c) **Doubly compound societies:** Through further aggregation of compound societies develops doubly compound society consisting of several clans compounded into tribes or tribal society.
- (d) **Treble compound societies:** In this society, tribes are organized into nation-states. This is the present form of the world.

(ii) Change from military to industrial society

This type of social structure depends on the relation of a society to other societies in its significant environment. While the military society is characterized by 'compulsory cooperation', industrial society is based upon 'voluntary cooperation'. Secondly, while the military society has a centralized government, the industrial society has a decentralized government. Thirdly, while the military society has economic autonomy it is not found in industrial society. The chief characteristic of military society is the *domination of State* over all social organizations. In the industrial State, on the other hand, the functions of the State are limited. Most of the societies in the present time are industrial societies.

2.6.1 Evolution of State

According to Herbert Spencer, the origin of the State is based upon the element of *fear* among the individuals. The State is based upon the authority of powerful

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individuals. It evolves into three stages: (i) Military State, (ii) Industrial State and (iii) Ethical State.

(i) Military State

In the formative period, when society was absolutely simple, indefinite and homogenous, there was no state authority. Various groups and communities used to fight with one another. During this period of chaos and lawlessness, some brave fighters were accepted as leaders whom others obeyed. However, since war was not occasional there was no permanent leader. Due to this reason, Military State was established. This State was hereditary as the post of the head was determined by paternity. Gradually, a committee was formed to advise the leader of the State. The members of the committee were either nominated by the head or were the people's representatives. The main aim of the Military State was to fight for self-defense as well as to conquer other States. The armies were most important and the society was organized for their welfare. The chief of the army was the king and head of the State. The State had all the rights over public property. The State was not for the individual but individuals were for the State. Therefore, there was no place for individual freedom.

(ii) Industrial State

The second stage in evolution was the Industrial State. Man understood that in industrial progress lies his economic industrial progress. Therefore, the State gradually attended to the progress of the industries. This led to change in the nature of State authority. It was gradually converted into Industrial State, the aim of which was the progress of industries. While the Military State aimed at victory in wars, the Industrial State did not aim at it. It gave more importance to the freedom and rights of the individuals. The interference of the State in the life of the individual gradually decreased. The representatives of the people occupied privileged places in the political system. Gradually, democratic principles evolved and the State became concerned with general welfare.

(iii) Ethical State

While Military State and Industrial State have been realized, Spencer's concept of *Ethical State* belongs to the future. This concept is imaginary. According to Spencer, the completion of the evolution of Industrial State will result in perfection of material richness of the people. This will satisfy the selfish nature of man. Therefore, he will now naturally follow norms of ethics. Unethical behaviour is due to material deprivations. As material deprivation disappears, ethical State will be a reality. In fact, there will be no State, the State will wither away as no eternal administration will be required. Man will be governed by himself. According to Spencer, human society is gradually evolving to this state.

2.7 ORGANIC ANALOGY

Auguste Comte and
Herbert Spencer

Herbert Spencer's theoretical idea of organic analogy was influenced by biology. His initial connection to biology helped him draw an analogy between the society and the biological organism. According to him, societies are akin to living bodies. As germs originate from a minuscule organism, similarly, societies also grow and evolve. He also argues that society is made up of organized systems, just like an organism; the same definition of life applies to both society and biology. Only when we witness the growth, maturity and decay of a society and the transformations passed through by aggregates of all orders, inorganic and organic, is there reached the concept of sociology as science.⁸

The social structure is a living organism. It is made up of parts which can be distinguished but which cannot survive or exist except within the framework of society. Spencer wanted to explain clearly the nature of social structure by the help of this theory. He believes that all individuals lose their individuality and become a part of the society. On the other hand, he is also an individualist, a firm advocate of the independence and rights of the individual. He only tried to point out certain striking similarities between the individual living organism and society on account of which the individual may be regarded as microcosmic society and society as macrocosmic individual. He argues:

It is also the character of social bodies, as of living bodies, that while they increase in size they increase in structure. Like a low animal, the embryo of a high one has few distinguishable parts; but while it acquires greater mass, its parts multiply and differentiate. It is thus with a society. At initial stage the unlikeness among its groups of units are inconspicuous in number and degree, but as population augments, divisions and subdivisions become more numerous and more decided. Further, in the social organism as in the individual organism, differentiation ceases only with that completion of the type which marks maturity and precede decay.⁹

Spencer drew a comparison between the society and individual thus:

- (i) **Different from inanimate bodies:** The first similarity between a living organism and society is their difference from inanimate bodies. None of them is inanimate. In inanimate objects, there is no growth and development, but on the other hand, there is continuous growth and development in both society and living organism. Thus, on account of their common difference from the inanimate bodies, society and living organism may be regarded to be similar.

⁸ Spencer, H. 1986. *Principle of Sociology*. Vol. III, New York: D. Appleton.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II

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- (ii) Increase in quantity leads to change in structure:** The second similarity in society and living organism is that increase of quantity in both leads to change in their structure. According to Spencer, living organism starts from being a unicellular creature; with the increase in cells, differentiation of organs results. At the higher level of evolution, the structure of the body becomes quite complex. Similar is the case with society. In the beginning, the structure of society is very simple. At this level each individual does all the work by himself and there is no differentiation of functions. Each man himself is a craftsman, hunter, sculptor, etc. But with the quantitative increase in society, the structure of society becomes increasingly complex and there is increasing differentiation of functions in society. Like the organs of the organism, the functions in society become specialized.
- (iii) Change in structure leads to change in functions:** With the change in the structure in organisms and communities, there results a change in their functions. The functions become more and more sophisticated and specialized.
- (iv) Differentiation as well as harmony of organs:** While it is true that with the evolution there develops greater differentiation in the organs of society as also that of an individual, but along with this, there is also harmony between various organs. Each organ is *complementary* to the other and not opposed. This holds true both for the body of a living organism and society.
- (v) Loss of an organ does not necessarily result in the loss of organism:** The society as well as individual is an organism. It is a fact common for both that a loss of some organs does not necessarily result in the *death* of an organism. If an individual loses his hand, it is not necessary that this may result in his death. Similarly, in the case of society, loss of a particular association does not necessarily mean death of the society.
- (vi) Similar processes and method of organization:** There is another similarity between the society and the living organism. According to Spencer, there are various systems in an organism responsible for its efficient functioning. Similarly, in a society, transport system, production and distribution systems, etc., fulfil their respective roles.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. What does 'Known' and 'Unknown' relate to?
7. What do you understand by the term 'survival of the fittest'?
8. Why is the Ethical State imaginary?

2.8 SUMMARY

*Auguste Comte and
Herbert Spencer*

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- According to Comte, a stable social order rested on a consistent form of thought. He saw his own thought as leading to the establishment of a more stable, industrial order. He saw this relationship between thought and practice as a natural rather than a causal one and saw thought as evolving naturally toward the kind of philosophy which he was formulating and recommending.
- The subject matter of sociology is society. It studies the structure of the society and the set of rules governing its functions.
- Sociology tries to explore these principles which help society to stay integrated and in order. According to him it is highly important that the law of sociology should be scientific.
- The method of sociology includes observation as well as experimentation. Observation must be guided by a theory of social phenomena.
- Each branch of knowledge passes through three stages, theological or fictitious, metaphysical or abstract, and scientific or positive.
- Social statics is concerned with the present structure of the society. It studies the current laws rule and present condition of the society.
- Social dynamics observed as to how the present social laws are affecting the society. It is also evaluates the social structure. Social statics also studies the correlation between various social facts.
- Spencer believed that the knowledge of society is a science and can be achieved only by scientific method. While analysing his theory of evolution, Spencer has divided the Universe into two segments: Known and Unknown.
- Spencer was of the view that the rules and laws governing evolution in the physical world also apply to society. In order to understand the law of social evolution it is necessary to understand the laws of physical evolution. Spencer believed that society has characteristics of a science. The science of sociology is super organic. Society is the science concerned exclusively with the phenomena resulting form the cooperation of citizens.
- Spencer proposed the theory of general evolution, according to which matter passes from a relatively indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity.
- Spencer's first and foremost concern was evolutionary changes in social structures and social institutions, rather than with the attendant mental states.
- The society is gradually moving form homogenous structure to heterogeneous structure.
- According to Spencer the theory of social evolution divided into two stages—the movement from simple to compound societies, and change from military to industrial society.

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- According to Spencer, the social structure is a living organism. It is made up of parts which can be distinguished but which cannot survive or exist except within the frame work of society.

2.9 KEY TERMS

- **Fetishism:** A belief that there is some living spirit in non-living objects.
- **Polytheism:** Stage where man had classified god and every natural force had a presiding deity.
- **Monotheism:** Belief that one God is supreme and that he is responsible for the maintenance of order and system in the world.
- **Simply societies:** Primitive society without any complexities and consisting of several families.
- **Compound societies:** Many simple societies make up a compound society.
- **Doubly compound societies:** Through further aggregation of compound societies develops doubly compound society consisting of several clans compounded into tribes or tribal society.
- **Treble compound:** In this society, tribes are organized into nation states.
- **Organic analogy:** Theory that holds that societies are akin to living organisms.

2.10 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Comte was born in 1798, during the French Revolution.
2. His parents were devout Catholics and ardent royalists. Comte was a brilliant student excelling in physics and math with an unusual memory. His early career was poorly organized and a rather self-destructive affair in which he proceeded to 'shoot himself in the foot' several times. Along with fourteen others he was expelled from school after a student uprising over a geometry instructor, thus dashing hopes of an otherwise promising academic career.
3. Physics, chemistry, biology are a few of the definite sciences.
4. Some of the scientific techniques that are employed to take sociology towards other definite sciences are observation, experimentation, comparison and classification.
5. The stages through which the human mind passes are theological or fictitious, metaphysical or abstract and scientific or positive.
6. Spencer believed that the knowledge of society is a science and can be achieved only by scientific methods. While analysing his theory of evolution, Spencer divided the Universe into two segments: Known and Unknown.

7. The evolution of species or societies, for Spencer, is a matter of the 'survival of the fittest'. Darwin's term for this notion is 'natural selection', and he was later to suggest that he actually preferred Spencer's phrase. According to this notion, evolutionary processes filter out unfit species.
8. While Military State and Industrial State have been realized, Spencer's concept of *Ethical State* belongs to the future. This concept is imaginary. According to Spencer, the completion of the evolution of Industrial State will result in perfection of material richness of the people. This will satisfy the selfish nature of man. Therefore, he will now naturally follow norms of ethics. Unethical behaviour is due to material deprivations. As material deprivation disappears, Ethical State will be a reality.

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2.11 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a note on Comte's early life.
2. How is sociology moving towards definite science?
3. List the various stages in the theological state.
4. What do you understand by social dynamics?
5. List two of Spencer's famous works.
6. Why did Spencer use the term 'survival of the fittest' in relation to sociology?
7. What are the stages of the social evolution theory?
8. Write a short note on the Military State.
9. Why is Spencer's Ethical State imaginary?

Long-Answer Questions

1. 'Sociology is a scientific study of society'. Discuss.
2. Analyse the hierarchy of science.
3. Discuss Comte's idea of human progress.
4. Elaborate on the theory of organic analogy.
5. Discuss Spencer's idea of social evolution.

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UNIT 3 KARL MARX AND MAX WEBER

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Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Karl Marx
- 3.3 Dialectical Materialism
- 3.4 Materialistic Interpretation of History
- 3.5 Class and Class Struggle
- 3.6 Alienation
- 3.7 Theory of Surplus Value
- 3.8 Theory of Social Change
- 3.9 Max Weber
- 3.10 Social Action
- 3.11 Authority
 - 3.11.1 Weber's Discussion of Authority Relations
- 3.12 Bureaucracy
- 3.13 Religion and Economy
- 3.14 Class, Status and Power
- 3.15 Summary
- 3.16 Key Terms
- 3.17 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.18 Questions and Exercises
- 3.19 Further Reading/References

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will study about the lives and works of Karl Marx and Max Weber. We will focus on Marx's methodology of dialectical materialism, material interpretation of history, class and class struggle, alienation, theory of surplus value and theory of social change. The unit will further discuss Weber's theories of ideal type, *Verstehen* approach, his thoughts on causality, social action, authority, bureaucracy, religion and economy, and class, status and power. We will critically analyse the effects of these theories on the development of sociology and Marx and Weber's contribution as sociologists.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Learn about the life and works of Karl Marx
- Learn about the life and works of Max Weber

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- Understand Marx's methodology of dialectical materialism
- Discuss the material interpretation of history
- Critically analyse Marx's theory on class and class struggle
- Elaborate on the theories of alienation and surplus value
- Understand Marx's theory of social change
- Know more about Weber's theories of ideal type
- Discuss Weber's *Verstehen* approach
- Examine Weber's thoughts on causality, social action, authority and bureaucracy
- Critique Weber's views on religion and economy, and class, status and power

3.2 KARL MARX

Karl Marx was a socialist theoretician and organizer, a major figure in the history of economic and philosophical thought, and a great social prophet. He was born on 5 May 1818 to Keinrich and Henrietta Marx in Germany. In 1835 when he was seventeen, Karl Marx entered the University of Bonn to study Law but he abandoned Law and, influenced by Hegelianism (theory of History) joined Young Hegelians. Karl Marx took up the study of philosophy. Finally in 1841 at the age of twenty-three he received the doctoral degree from the University of Jena for his thesis entitled, *On the Difference between the Natural Philosophy of Democritus and Epicurus*. Owing to his outspoken views and writings he lost his chance of becoming a university teacher. Then he began writing for a radical, left-wing newspaper, *Rheinische Zeitung*, based in Cologne. He became the Editor of the newspaper in 1842. However, the government banned the newspaper because of a series of radically controversial articles by Marx on current social conditions. Before leaving for Paris, Marx had married Jenny von Vestphalen, a childhood girlfriend of a higher social class, precipitating a barrage of criticism and hostility from his family and friends. The years in Paris (1843–1845) proved determinative in Marx's intellectual ferment comparable to his German years among the Hegelians. The most significant and important development of this period was his life-long friendship with Friedrich Engels. Both of them published *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. In August 1849 he migrated to London as the French government forced him to leave the country.

The sociological importance of Marx lies in the fact that his ideas have contributed to the development of a new approach to the study of social phenomena. Marx's genius lay not so much in his absolute originality but rather in the constellation and configuration of his ideas and insights gained from several influences. Hegel's influence upon him, for instance, is illustrative of Marx's receptivity and ability to modify a fundamental theory. For the Marxist ideology, the adoption and adaptation

of dialectics from Hegel by Marx was considered most important. Unlike the Hegelian idealism which perceived truth in ideas, Marx claimed the contrary; namely, that ideas were not the realm of truth but, rather, matter is. While Hegel's system could be called *dialectical idealism*, Marx gave himself over to the development of what came to be called as *dialectical materialism*. Marx emphasized the importance of material conditions in opposition to Hegelian idealism. He did not deny the reality of subjective consciousness or its significance in social change.

It has often been said that Marx fashioned his doctrines out of three major elements: German idealism (especially in its Hegelian version), French socialist tradition and British political economy. Other streams of thought, primarily the German and French Enlightenment, were equally important to him. According to Marx, the society consisted of moving contradictory forces balanced perfectly. However, when these create tension and struggle, societal changes take place. He maintained that not peaceful coexistence, but social tensions and struggle bring about the desired progress in a society. Social conflict, thus, was the basis of historical process.

3.3 DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Both Hegel and Comte had propounded that the evolution of ideas and the human spirit helped in the evolution of mankind. However, Marx's thinking was quite contrary to this. Though Marx was not satisfied by Hegelian idealism, but Hegel's use of dialectical methodology grabbed his attention. Marx drew heavily from Hegel in terms of his manner of approach and his analysis of social phenomena. However, Hegel was an idealist who asserted the *primacy of mind* whereas Marx asserted the *primacy of matters*. Marx's dialectal method was Hegel's opposite. Hegel considered the process of the brain, i.e., thinking, to be an independent subject (naming it *idea*) and placed mind over matter. Marx, on the other hand, placed more importance on the material world and held that the mind was just the reflection of the material world and our ideas of it. These ideas are actually translated into various forms of thought. Marx's singularity of concern was the creation of an interpretation and analytical methodology which would account for the dynamics of human social activity, thinking and action.

The basic postulate of Marxian dialectic method is:

- All phenomena of nature are part of an integrated whole.
- Nature is in continuous state of movement and change.
- The developmental process is a product of quantitative advance which culminate in abrupt qualitative changes.
- Contradictions are inherent in all realms of nature but particularly human society.

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This methodology perceived history as a series of stages based on a particular mode of production and characterized by a particular type of economic organization. Because of the inherent contradictions, each stage contained the seeds of its own destruction. Marx believed that no matter how well a society functions in terms of its own order and structure, it was destined to turmoil and revolution which led to the final breakdown of all class divisions. The established order becomes an obstacle to progress and a new order begins to rise. A struggle ensues between the class representing the old order and the class representing the new order.

The emerging class is essentially victorious, creating a new order of production that is a synthesis of the old and the new. This new order, however, contains the seeds of its eventual destruction and the dialectical process continues. The inevitability of the continuing struggle is related to the emergence of division of labour within society. It is this phenomenon of labour differentiation that forms antagonistic classes that in turn become the centre of competition and struggle against nature as well as against other elements within society. The dialectics is found within the interaction of society under the influence of matter, materialistic phenomena, and the methodology is to employ the primacy of matter on an interpretative mechanism to grasp the essence of human activity, especially the realm of economic activity.

3.4 MATERIALISTIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

The materialistic interpretation of history appears to be a passionate reaction of Marx to Hegel's idealistic interpretation of history which attributed a major determining role to the progressive evolution of idea. Marx would not ascribe an independent, determinate role to ideas or philosophical conception, for he believed that these *reflected*, rather than *caused*, changes in social and material life. We can focus on two important points in this context. Firstly, Marx had no contradiction with Hegel's dialectical logic; what he rejected was the *idealistic trammel* of Hegel's philosophy. Secondly, although Marx emphasized the importance of material conditions in opposition to Hegelian idealism, he never denied the reality of subjective consciousness or its significance in social change. For Marx, the motivating factor in human existence is struggle for survival. This survival, necessary to produce the means of subsistence, was fundamental to human life and human action in community and society. It was a fact underlying all human interaction. According to Marx, the first historical act is the production of material life itself. This is indeed a historical act, a fundamental condition of all history.¹ According to Marx, the society is an arena, within which the struggle and strife between groups of people competing forces for survival and improved livelihood generated social change. Rousseau believed that society progressed due to peaceful harmony in a cooperating and helpful community of like-minded citizens, bound together by an

¹ Karl Marx. 1964. *Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*. London: McGraw-Hill.

agreed-upon social contract. On the contrary, Marx thought of struggle and contention, strife and competition as the mechanism for social advancement in community. For Marx, human history was the record of human struggle amongst men and human efforts to dominate and control the physical and social environment. Marx contended that in material life, the modes of production determined the general attributes of the social, spiritual, as well as political aspects of human life. The attributes of social existence of men determined their consciousness.

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Following are Marx's important ideas of material interpretation of history:

- Man enters into definite relations by the force of economic circumstances such as the forces and relations of production. Thus, historical processes are determined by economic forces.
- The infrastructure of a society includes forces and relations of production. On this is based the superstructure of legal and political institutions, as well as ways of thinking.
- Mechanism of the historical movement is the contradiction between the forces and relations of production.
- This contradiction leads to class struggle, which, according to Karl Marx, is the main factor in historical evolution.
- The dialectics of the forces and relations of production implies a theory of revolution.
- Social reality governs consciousness and not vice versa.
- The stages of human history may be distinguished on the basis of their economic mode of production. These stages are the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal and the bourgeois.

3.5 CLASS AND CLASS STRUGGLE

While explaining the theory of social change, Marx brought out the notion of social class. Marx's class theory rests on the premise that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle'. According to this view, ever since human society emerged from its primitive and relatively undifferentiated state, it has remained fundamentally divided between classes that clash in the pursuit of class interests. According to Marx, the struggles for power that result from class interests are the basic agents of social process. The relationship of men always depends upon their positions vis-à-vis the means of productions and Marx's analysis centres on such differential access to scarce resources and scarce power. Every unequal society would definitely have the potential for class struggles as such a system will generate conflicts of class interests. He analysed the various social and economic positions and the negative experiences therein that led to individuals taking action to improve the collective fate of their community.

Marx termed a social class as a group of people in an organization of production, who performed the same function. However, the social or financial

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position of the person in a society is not really important; what mattered were the *functions* he performed in the process of production. Self-conscious classes were completely different from aggregates of people sharing a common fate. The self-conscious class needs a method of communication, a common bond between people, a form of organization and of course, a common enemy in order to evolve into a better and equal society.

According to Marx, social classes have been there right from the beginning of human history. He differentiated between stages of human history on the basis of their economic regimes or modes of productions which he called *primitive*, *ancient*, *feudal* and *capitalist*. In all these societies, there had been a two-fold class distinction. However, primitive communism was the first and lowest form of organization of people and it existed for many years. It was a hunting and gathering society which provides an only example of a classless society. Then all societies were developed into two major classes, *masters* and *slaves* in ancient society; *feudal lords* and *serfs* in feudal society, and *bourgeoisie* and *proletariat* in capitalist societies. The subject class is formed of a majority of people while the ruling class is a minority. In primitive communism, societies were based on socialistic mode of production. Classes did not exist and all members shared the same relations to the forces of production. As man learnt the technique of agriculture, this subsistence economy got changed to a *surplus economy*. The rudimentary division of labour of hunting and gathering band was replaced by a complex and specialized division. As a result of this, a group started establishing hegemony over other groups through its skills. They were the *capitalists* who became the repository of private property and their accumulation of surplus wealth started ingraining the concept of *class* in society.

However, Marx believed that the relationship between the two classes is of mutual dependence and conflict. He visualized that the capitalist society moves through a number of contradictions as: there is undervaluation of labour power of the labourer, i.e., the wages paid to the labourer are below the value of goods they produce. The gulf between the producer and consumer is huge. Though real production is accelerated by the labourer, profit is appropriated by the capitalists. There is also a situation of poverty amidst plenty. Due to the process of stratification and highly unequal distribution of wealth, poverty appears in its highest magnitude. The capitalist continue to be property owners and the have-nots are pushed further down with the passage of time. The contradictions contained in the capitalist societies will lead to its eventual destruction. It would give birth to *class consciousness* and the twin concept of 'class-in-itself' and 'class-for-itself' would become the offshoots of differing class interests in society.

Marx developed his theory of class conflict in the context of capitalist society. In the capitalistic mode of production the class antagonism acquires most acute dimensions. However, the main ingredients of the theory may be summarized as:

- (i) The development of proletariat: The capitalist economic system transformed the masses of people into workers, created for them a

common situation and inculcated in them awareness of common interest. Through the development of class consciousness the economic conditions of capitalism united the masses and constituted them into a class for itself.

- (ii) The importance of property: Classes are determined by the basis of individual's relation to the means of production. Development of class consciousness and conflict over the distribution of economic rewards fortified the class barriers.
- (iii) The identification of economic and political power and authority: Since the capitalist society is based on the concentration of means of production and distribution in the hands of a few, political power becomes the means by which a ruling class perpetuates its domination and exploitation of the masses. The capitalists who hold the monopoly of effective private property take control of the political machinery and their interests converge in the political and ideological spheres.
- (iv) Polarization of classes: Interest in the capitalist society leads towards the tendency of radical polarization of classes. The whole society breaks up into two increasingly hostile camps, two great directly antagonistic classes; the *bourgeois* and *proletariat*.
- (v) Theory of surplus value: Capitalists accumulate profit through exploitation of labour. The value of any commodity is determined by the amount of labour it takes to produce it. The labour time necessary for a worker to produce a value equal to the one he receives in the form of wages is less than the actual duration of his work. So, surplus value refers to the quantity of value produced by the worker beyond the necessary labour time.
- (vi) Pauperization: Poverty of the proletariat grows with increasing exploitation of labour. In a mode of production which invokes exploitation, the majority of people are condemned to toil for barest necessities of life. So, to Marx, poverty is the result of exploitation and not of scarcity.
- (vii) Alienation: The economic exploitation and inhuman working conditions lead to alienation of man. The worker becomes estranged from his own self and loses interest in work.
- (viii) Class solidarity and antagonism: With growth of class consciousness, the crystallization of social relations into two groups becomes streamlined and the classes tend to become internally homogeneous, and the class struggle more intensified.
- (ix) Revolution: A violent revolution breaks out at the height of class war which destroys the structure of capitalist society. This revolution is most likely to occur at the peak of an economic crisis which is part of the recurring booms and recessions, characteristic of capitalism.

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(x) The dictatorship of proletariat: The revolution terminates capitalist society and leads to the social dictatorship of the proletariat. The revolution is violent which leads to the loss of power of bourgeoisie and transforms them to the ranks of the proletariat. Thus, the inevitable historical process destroys the bourgeoisie and the proletariat establishes a social dictatorship, merely a transitional phase, to consolidate the gains of the revolution.

(xi) Inauguration of the communist society: A new zeal starts to constitute a *classless* society. In this socialistic society the State as a agent of exploitation wither away and everyone will give to the society according to their needs. So capitalist society, at a mature stage, through class struggle, will lead to abolition of class struggle and will lead to abolition of classes. Marx maintains that this abolition will culminate in a classless society, i.e., communism.

Thus Marx observes the history of humanity as the history of class struggle. The history reveals the struggle of the economic underdogs against their masters, bourgeoisie. So the very statement that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle no doubt bears the tone and temper of the Marxist philosophy of class struggle.

3.6 ALIENATION

A state of estrangement of a person from his own self as well as others is a psychosocial condition named 'alienation'. Marx borrowed the concept of estrangement from Hegel and Feurbach and gave a sociological angle to it in his book, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* published in 1844. The history of mankind, according to Marx, was a history of control of nature by man and a simultaneous history of continuing alienation of man. Under the strong condition known as alienation, a man is held captive by the forces created by his mind. Marx analysed all capitalist institutions like religion, politics, economy as well as the State, and concluded these to be responsible for bringing this condition to men. Just as a religious man holds his essence as an objective of an alien force (god), similarly, in a capitalist society, he holds himself object of an alien force, money. All his actions are guided by and aimed at procuring money. Under capitalism, men start worshiping money and it holds him under its sway. Alienation in the realm of capitalism has a four-fold objective. Man is alienated from: the object he produces; the process of production; his fellowmen as well as himself. Since man only works for money, he is not motivated for his own development and spiritual uplift. Work remains external and never really becomes a part of the individual. So, no matter how hard he tries, work never gives him the fulfillment he craves for. Thus, all workers constituting the proletariat are alienated from themselves, their community members, and of course from human life. The private assets created by the hard labour of these workers are thus results of these alienated workers. Thus Marx's alienation theory deals

with alienation of man and man; alienation of man from nature; alienation of the proletariat from the capitalists; and last but not the least, alienation of man from the State.

Karl Marx and Max Weber

3.7 THEORY OF SURPLUS VALUE

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The serfs in a feudal society were exploited but they were not confused about this. Serfs worked a small piece of land to support their own families; they worked on the lord's lands and on his roads. They 'owned' their own means of production. Most of them had hard lives to live; a few were not so badly off. In the towns of medieval Europe, we find some burghers administering the towns (hence the German term *bürger* (citizen) or the French *bourgeois*), as well as artisans and merchants. As feudalism began to wane, many serfs wanted to escape to the towns. They might have gone to work for an artisan and, if lucky, become an apprentice. Merchants would sell the artisans' products in far away markets (other towns).

As feudalism declined, however, the way of life of the towns began to spread. At first, a system referred to as *mercantilism* emerged. Some merchants were able to become quite wealthy simply by buying the wares of local artisans and transporting those long distances to places where they could fetch a high price. They would also bring back items which were not locally available, such as silk from China. In the northern Italian cities of Genoa, Venice, and Pisa, for example, many merchants flourished towards the end of the Middle Ages. The next step in this process was for the merchant to gain control over the production of the goods which he was selling abroad. At first, this led to a 'putting-out system' or 'cottage industry'. In the production of a given kind of item, say, woollen cloth, the merchant would buy wool from a farmer, take it to someone else to be washed, then elsewhere to be dyed, carded, spun, and, finally, woven. Each of the operatives at the different stages of the process would probably be supplementing their farm incomes, and the whole family would sometimes take part in aspects of this production. Ultimately, the merchants would sell these goods to richer businessmen and industrialists.

Eventually, the merchants organized the production, or at least as many aspects of the process as possible, under one roof. This centralization necessitated the hiring of wage labour on a large scale. But most potential workers were still located in the countryside. When these people were 'freed' from the land, they went to work in the new industries in the cities. Freed from their means of production, they had little choice but to make their living in this way. They had only one commodity to sell, their labour.

In the preceding description of the labour theory of value, we have been outlining processes appropriate to a state of affairs called *simple commodity production*. This is a condition where many people are independent, small producers who own the products of their labour and sell these products for the

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other things they need. As a pure and predominant form of production, this state of affairs probably did not exist for very long. Of course, now we know that most of us do not live by selling the products of our labour. We sell our labour-power. However, labour-power as a commodity has existed for a long time. The Babylonians had wage labourers. But the dominance of labour-power as a commodity is fairly recent, and its rise to dominance probably began around the 16th century in Europe. Since labour-power is a commodity, like other commodities, it has a use-value and an exchange-value. Its exchange-value, as discussed in the last paragraph, is essentially its cost of production. In other words, how much does it cost to keep wage labourers (as a class) alive? The answer, of course, is the cost of food, shelter, and clothing. The capitalist gives up a portion of capital in the form of these necessities, and this results in the payment of wages. There are other forms of non-waged labour, such as domestic, not considered in this analysis.

But what is the use-value of labour-power? Why does the capitalist buy it? The answer to this question is to increase the exchange-value of his/her goods (i.e., for profit). What is contracted, for this bargain, whether formally written or not, is for the wage labourer to work for the capitalist for a certain number of hours per day in return for a wage, approximately equal to the labourer's cost of living. The wage labourer, say a weaver, comes to work for the capitalist and agrees to work fourteen hours a day in return for three shillings, the approximate daily cost of production of labour-power in England in 1867. With this, the labourer could rent a garret room, buy enough bread to sustain life, secure minimal clothing, and occasionally, go to the public house for a pint.

What is the capitalist receiving in exchange? For the three shillings, the capitalist is getting fourteen hours of labour. During these fourteen hours, the labourer is producing cloth. However if, for example, it takes the labourer eight hours to produce enough cloth, which when sold is equivalent to the wages of the three shillings, he does not get to go home. He must, according to the contract, keep working for an additional six hours. The cloth produced during this period, when sold, accrues to the capitalist in the form of *surplus value* or profit. The first eight hours or the *necessary labour time* is that period during which the labourer works to cover the wage contract. The remaining six hours, *surplus labour time*, is that period during which the labourer's products increase the exchange-value of the capitalist's goods. This, after all, is the use-value of labour-power, its capacity to create value.

Now the capitalist, anxious to further increase the exchange-value of the goods, will attempt to further enhance this process. The first and most obvious way to do this is to increase the absolute length of the working day. It still costs only three shillings to produce labour-power, but now, if the working day is increased by two hours to a total of sixteen hours, the surplus labour time is increased from six to eight hours, two more hours in which the labourer's products help to enrich the capitalist. This represents an increase in absolute surplus value. There has

been a high political and social cost to this strategy, however. Labour movements against this kind of practice proved costly to the capitalist. As the labourers' health and quality of life declined, they became unwilling to accept this way of increasing surplus value. There emerged another way of increasing surplus labour time which did not require lengthening the working day. This strategy involved changing the relative lengths of the necessary and surplus periods of the day. If that portion of the working day devoted to necessary labour time could be reduced, then the remaining period would be increased. In other words, if a way could be found for the workers to produce enough to cover the wage contract in less time, more surplus value would accrue to the capitalist. By speeding up production, introducing new technologies, reorganizing the labour process, and by cheapening the means of life (food, shelter, and clothing), the capitalist proved capable of changing the relative lengths of the parts of the working day. If the necessary labour time is reduced to six hours, and the length of the whole working day remains at fourteen hours, the surplus labour time is increased from six to eight hours, an increase in surplus value for the capitalist. This represents an increase in *relative surplus value*.

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3.8 THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Karl Marx, from a conflict perspective, provided a dialectical historical approach for the study of social change. Marx's interpretation of social change has something in common with evolutionary theories. Both regard the major patterns of change as being brought about by interaction with the material environment. Marx opined that the economic structure that every society rests on might get modified over a period of time, thereby influencing and affecting changes in the legal, political and cultural institutions. Human beings are always bringing in change in their systems of production and controlling the material world, thereby making changes in the social infrastructure. The level of economic progress of a society can be determined by these changes. Marx believed that social change is brought about not by a slow process, but by a revolutionary transformation. Slow changes in the balance of social power alternates with violent, revolutionary transformation. This has been referred to as *dialectical interpretation of change*.

In Marx's theory of social change, two elements in social life have a predominant place: (i) the development of technology (productive forces) and (ii) the relations between social classes. The theory states that a dominant class maintains and stabilizes a system of class relations and a definite mode of production. These correspond to a definite stage of production. But the continuing development of productive forces changes the relations between classes, and the condition of their conflict, and in due course the dominated class is able to overthrow the existing mode of production and system of social relationship. They usher in a new social order. Marx stretched his theory of historical change; he used it as a guiding thread for research and devoted his powers to the analysis of one complex