

Axis 1: Sociology: origin and development

Like every other scientific endeavour, thought and academic discipline (even the most abstract ones), sociology was developed at a particular point in history through carefully thought out intellectual reflections and an expression of current situations and predicaments in society at that time. And even though the discipline was coined in 1838 by Auguste Comte, sociological writings have a long background in history and are rooted in the works of philosophers.

I . Définition of sociology :

Sociology is the study of human society and social behavior. It is a social science that focuses on understanding the patterns, relationships, and structures that shape individuals and groups within a society. Sociology examines various aspects of society, including institutions, social groups, social interactions, and social change.

II. The goal of sociology :

The goal of sociology is to analyze and explain social phenomena by applying theoretical frameworks and conducting empirical research. Sociologists study a wide range of topics such as social inequalities, culture, crime, education, family, politics, and global dynamics. They seek to understand how social factors influence individuals' beliefs, behaviors, and opportunities, as well as how social systems operate and evolve over time.

Sociology provides insights into social issues, helps identify societal problems, and contributes to the development of policies and interventions aimed at addressing social challenges and improving the overall well-being of individuals and communities. It also helps individuals gain a better understanding of their own social roles, identities, and experiences within the broader social context.

III. Origin of sociology :

Some scholars used sociological perspectives in their analyses of the relationship between the individuals and the society. For instance, the 13th-century Chinese historian and philosopher Ma Tuan-Lin in his seminal encyclopedia Wen-Hsien T'ung K'ao translated as the General Study of Literary Remains examined the social factors that influence history and was the first to

identify social dynamics as the factors affecting development throughout history.

14th century philosopher and historian Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) often considered as one of the world's first sociologists, also discussed emerging issues of his time, some of his works include; a social conflict theory, an analysis of the similarities and differences between nomadic and sedentary life, a description of political economy, and an investigation linking the level of social cohesion of a tribe to its capacity for power, all of which is believed to set the foundation of the development of modern sociology.

Despite the writings and contributions of early philosophers, the basis for sociology as a modern discipline was not established until the nineteenth century. So sociology as a discipline emerged in the early 19th century during a time of social and political upheaval in Europe. The Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution brought significant social changes that sparked interest in understanding and addressing the problems associated with these transformations.

It was to this effect that the science of society was coined as the systematic study of society and social relationships, Early sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Karl Marx and Max Weber began an expedition of new ways of thinking.

Auguste Comte ([1798-1857](#)) is often considered the founder of sociology. He coined the term "sociology" and proposed it as a new scientific discipline that would study society and social life systematically. Comte advocated for a positivist approach to studying society, emphasizing the use of scientific methods to gather data and make objective observations about social phenomena.

Other influential figures in the development of sociology include Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Marx's work focused on the relationship between economic systems and social classes, while Durkheim explored the role of social institutions in maintaining social order and cohesion. Weber examined the influence of religion, bureaucracy, and social action on society.

Sociology started to institutionalize as an academic discipline in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the establishment of sociology departments and the publication of influential sociological works. Today, sociology is a widely

recognized and respected field of study, with diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical research methods.

IV. Development of sociology :

The development of sociology as a discipline has been shaped by a variety of factors and perspectives over time. Here are some key developments in the field:

- ✓ **Classical Sociological Theory:** The work of early sociologists such as Comte, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber laid the foundation for sociological theory. They developed key concepts and frameworks to understand social phenomena, such as social class, social order, religion, and bureaucracy.
- ✓ **Methodological Approaches:** Sociologists have used various research methods to study society and social behavior. Early sociologists, influenced by positivism, emphasized quantitative methods and a scientific approach. However, in the 20th century, qualitative methods gained recognition, focusing on understanding social meanings and subjective experiences.
- ✓ **The Chicago School:** In the early 20th century, the University of Chicago was a hub for sociological research, and the Chicago School of sociology emerged. Scholars such as George Herbert Mead and Robert Park explored urban sociology, symbolic interactionism, and the influence of the environment on human behavior.
- ✓ **Functionalism and Conflict Theory:** Functionalism, associated with thinkers like Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton, emphasizes the interdependence of different parts of society and their functions in maintaining social order. Conflict theory, influenced by Marx, focuses on the inherent conflicts and power struggles in society, particularly related to social inequality.
- ✓ **Critical Theory and Feminist Sociology:** Critical theory, associated with scholars such as Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas, examines how power structures and ideologies shape social inequality and oppression. Feminist sociology highlights gender as a key social category and analyzes how it intersects with other forms of inequality.
- ✓ **Postmodernism and Postcolonial Theory:** These theoretical perspectives challenge modernist assumptions about society, truth, and knowledge. Postmodernism emphasizes the social construction of reality, while

postcolonial theory examines the impacts of colonization and imperialism on societies and their knowledge systems.

- ✓ Globalization and Transnational Sociology: With the increasing interconnectedness of societies, sociologists have turned their attention to the impacts of globalization on various social processes, such as migration, economic systems, and cultural exchange. Transnational sociology explores social phenomena that transcend national boundaries.

These are just some of the developments that have shaped the field of sociology. Today, sociology continues to evolve with new theoretical perspectives, interdisciplinary approaches, and research areas addressing contemporary social issues.