

Origins of Sociology

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WHEN, WHERE, & WHY WAS SOCIOLOGY WAS INVENTED?

CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHERS & SOCIAL THINKERS:

- *Confucius: (1551 - 1479 BC):* talked about leaders & role models in society
- *Plato (427 -347 BC):*
- *Aristotle (384 - 322BC):* thought social institutions were the outgrowth of our...
- *Ibn Khaldun (1332 - 1406):*
- *Shakespeare (1564 - 1616):*
- *Montesquieu (1689 - 1755):* argues human laws are arbitrary; not universal

None of the above approached society from a sociological point of view, rather they just imagined the ideal society

SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIOLOGY

- industrial, political (french revolution specifically), scientific revolution led to sociology, along w/ urbanization
 - *Industrialization:* societies transfer from agriculture to machinery (i.e manufacturing & related industries)
 - *Urbanization:* moving from rural areas to cities (which at first couldn't really handle all the new growth as they were quite small originally)
 - these two above led to many social problems [anonymity, isolation, inadequate housing, crowded cities, unsanitary & unhealthy work & living conditions, homelessness, high rates of poverty, pollution, criminal behaviour, etc]

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- workers were used to being in control (i.e farmers being their own bosses) so there was a lot of discontent among the working class [strikes, protest, social uprising, angry mobs clashing w/ police or army] ; child labour was normal

These were the most profound changes to communities therefore big changes followed.

NOVELS THAT WERE FROM THE 19TH CENTURY

They displayed life during that time well.

- Les misérables by Victor Hugo
- Germinal by Emile Zola
- Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens
- Herman Melville's novels

POLITICAL/ DEMOGRAPHIC REVOLUTIONS

- Changes in political thought:

- Society as the product of individual self-interest (don't gotta be loyal; be selfish)
- *New political climate: individual freedom & rights*

- French Revolution:

- Introduction of a new principle into history by demanding political action to redress was property
- Was like the *big bang of revolutions*
- If you went against the French Revolution you'd go straight to the guillotine
- Their motto: Liberty, Equality & Fraternity

EARLY SOCIOLOGISTS

- primary concern was how and why societies change & social norms that hold it together

- how previous societies differ from current ones

Auguste Comte (1798 - 1857):

- coined word sociology; but originally wanted to name it social physics
- **sought to do a science of society**; believed extending methods used in physics to find law of sociology
- **French Revolution weakened traditional societal ties; wanted to bring order back**
- **social statics (order & stability) & dynamics (conflict & change)**
- **founding father of sociology**

Emile Durkheim (1858 - 1917):

- **true founder; helped made sociology respectable; brought sociology to university**
- created first rules of method in sociology
- created first academic sociological journal *Sociologique* (1898)
- thought society is not the # of people living in it; consequently society transcends the individual [**society is more than the sum of it's parts**; has a unique character of its own; **not reducible to the behaviour of one individual**]
- there is a social world (??)
- **Social Facts: patterned ways of acting, thinking, & feeling that exist outside any one individual but that exert social control over each person** [things that live outside of us; exert social form of us]
 - **Suicide as a social fact: social distribution of suicide & it's rate among different groups & countries**
 - For any given country the suicide rate is stable over time
 - It also differs wildly among them [Britain > 2x Italy // Denmark > 4x Britain]

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- Main difference in those countries were their religions (protistans vs catholics) ; but both of them condemn suicide
- Most likely to take their lives: rich, men, widowed, etc = more choices
 - *Social Integration*: categories of people w/ strong social ties had low suicide rates; more socially isolated or individualistic people had higher suicide rates
 - more social interaction w/ others = lower suicide rates
 - *Altruistic Suicide*: doing it for the community
 - *Selfish Suicide*: feels left out & not apart of society so this is the solution
 - *Fatalistic Suicide*: sees no escape except death

Karl Marx (1818 -1883):

- most profound impact on sociology; 70 years after his death many people began to adopt his political views (which is impressive cause 70 years isn't that long)
- Feared that people would be uprooted (cared for social stability)
 - Stressed importance social conflict & the need for further change & revolution
- Saw the exploitation of labour (probably the first person to acknowledge child labour as bad)
 - Concerned about oppression, exploitation, and alienation
- Believed that economy is everything and that it determined everything else
 - Economic determinism & the key to human history = class conflict

Economic Determinism: every aspect of social life is based on economic relationships

Key To Human History: conflict between those who own means of production & those who do not = class conflict (aka rich vs poor)

- owners of the means = dominate part of society

Case of Industrial Societies: conflict between bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the proletariat (working class)

Socialism: dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie

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- called workers to unit and start a revolution against the capitalist class
- Step by Step Revolution by Marx:
 - Unit all the workers (worldwide)
 - establish social state
 - establish communism

Communism: classless system in which the means of production are collectively owned and wealth and power are evenly distributed

* *Fun Fact: Marx lived in exile and was only allowed back into London because he was going to die soon**

Max Weber (1864 - 1920):

- believed in bureaucracy (?) was killing modern society
- Focused on meaningful social action
 - *Meaningful Social Action*: motives
 - Motives that underlie human behaviour
 - Ways in which people interpret and explain their own behaviour and that of others
 - The way in which these actions and meaning affect social order
 - Basically, must be able to walk in the shoes of the other party & understand how the same event can have different consequences for different people
- *Verstehen*: understanding, insight (see above)
- Believed that economy and beliefs = important in order to change society