Emergence of Sociology: The 3 Great Revolutions

LECTURE 3

History of Sociology

- How old is Sociology? : Just 200 years old
- Newer streams of thought do not occur in vacuum.
- Several social forces create conditions for emergence of a discipline Political, Economic and Intellectual
- Social forces can be material but also ideological.
- Three important social forces that shaped the emergence of sociology:
 - The Enlightenment
 - The French Revolution
 - The Industrial Revolution
- Together they created: 'The Great Transformation' (Karl Polyani, 1944) as they led to creation of new ideas about 'Man', 'Society' and 'Nature'

The Age of Enlightenment



Source: Joseph Wright of Derby, *A Philosopher Giving A Lecture at the Orrery*, c. 1765, oil on canvas, 147 x 203 cm (Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Derby, England)

- Enlightenment- Critical event in the development of Sociology (1685-1815). Period of remarkable intellectual development.
- Human being have always been interested in the source of their behaviour.
- Traditionally all ideas were explained in religious terms or through myths and superstition. The Catholic Church determined the principles of nature.
- However, in 16th century, many scientific discoveries challenged church supremacy.
- Copernicus model of Heliocentricism Challenged the traditional Church propagated belief around Geocentrism; Galileo's Telescope established it; Newton's Law of gravity proved it (Church had to accept it)
- Common people started questioning Church and thus began the age of Enlightenment.
- Largely the work of French and British Philosophers Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu



- This was a period of optimism of a belief that science and reason could make society and human condition better- Progress, knowledge, freedom, and happiness.
- Enlightenment era marked a Shift in thinking from Religion to Science. Belief in 'Deism' God exists but he leaves it up to mankind to make their own path in life So can human beings devise best ways to live?
- Early Sociologists were deeply influenced by this idea. They wanted to combine empirical research (scientific) with reason wanted this kind of research to address social issues.
- Early founders of Sociology like August Comte, Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkhiem shared this idea of enlightenment that society can be improved if we have a 'science of society'

- Sociology also grew out of negative reaction to Enlightenment.
- For some early conservative thinkers, like Louis De Bonald and Joseph de Maistre were deeply religious also.
- For them, God created the world, He is supreme and reason (which is human) is inferior to Religion.
- Gave primacy to society over individualism
- Emphasized not altering traditional institutions: Patriarchy, Monogamous family, Monarchy, Church
- Even in this conservative view, they added value to study of society by emphasizing the "irrational" aspects of social life.
- They looked upon Religion, Emotionalism and tradition as "necessary components of social life" emphasis on "social order" very relevant for sociologists
- Sociology's belief in Scientific study of Society can be linked back to this period.

The French Revolution



Source: Eugene Delacroix. Liberty Leading The People, 1830. Louvre Museum, public domain.

- Period of radical social and political upheaval in France from 1789-1799
- Posed Challenge to the existing traditional order 3 estate Feudal system Clergy (1st estate), Aristocrats
 (2nd estate) and peasants, merchants, lawyers, artisans and industrial workers (3rd estate)
- Theory of Divine right of the King God's mandation of political legitimacy of a monarchy. Belief that events and organization of society was result of God's will and therefore should not be questioned.
- First 2 estates constituted less than 1% of population but reaped all benefits, estate 3- laboured + tax burdened
- At the same time French Philosophers propagated ideas of liberty and Equality.
- Montesquieu rejected the theory of the Divine Right of Kings and urged for separation of powers-Secularism (Religion and Politics separate); Rousseau, in his book 'Social Contract', announced that sovereign power lay in popular will.
- 3rd estate, full of resentment was influenced by these ideas.

- Immediate factor that led to revolution: France went through immense economic challenge under wars Bankrupt government under Louis XVI and his wife Queen Marie Antoinette
- Aristocracy proposed to further increase Taxes
- Meeting of Estates-General was called Estate 3 demanded for change in voting patterns but it
 was denied and they walked out of the meeting
- A few weeks later, the third estate declared themselves to be the National Assembly and August 1789 presented Declaration of rights of Man- "Men are born and remain free and are equal in rights.".
- Uprising led by food shortages, extreme poverty of masses and not just enlightenment ideas of freedom and liberty.
- All this turmoil culminated into Formation of constitution (1791) marked the End of Monarchy and move towards Democracy – Period of immense political turmoil – complete anarchy and disorder.
- In this context of disorder, sociology emerged .

Impact of Enlightenment and French Revolution

Sociology's Emphasis on Social Order and Scientific Method

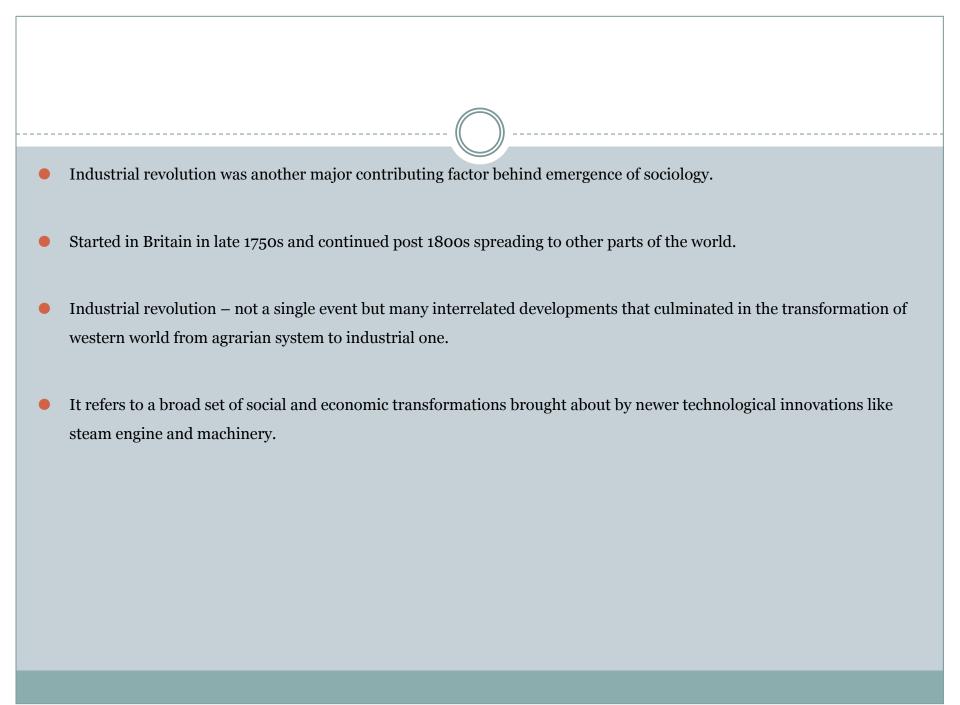


- August Comte Father of sociology proposed sociology (1838)in this climate of disorder.
- He believed that study of sociology should be 'scientific'
- Greatly disturbed by the anarchy created through enlightenment and French Revolution, he developed the scientific view of 'positivism' Applying natural science methodology to study social phenomenon.
- First referred to sociology as 'Social Physics'
- Sociology to study both Social Statics and Social Dynamics
- He proposed the law of 3 stages:- Human societies progress through the following 3 stages
 - o Theological (-1300) Dominated by Religion (Gods, Spirits, Demons)
 - Metaphysical (1300-1800) Dominated by Abstract forces- Nature
 - Positive (1800-) Dominated by Science
- His main argument was social universe is amenable to development of abstract laws that can be tested through careful collection of data.

The Industrial Revolution

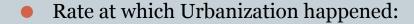


Source: Alexander Stanhope Forbes, The Munitions Girls, 1918, Wellcome Collection, United Kingdom





- Major impacts the industrial revolution created was:
 - Shift from land to industry for livelihood
 - Technologically driven factories assembly line mode of production
 - Emergence of large bureaucracies to manage industries
 - Emergence of Capitalism with the idea of a free market place
 - Newer forms of relationships notion of 'free labour'
 - □ Within this system few profited, rest exploited with longer working hours
 - ☐ Reaction against this started Labour Movements
 - Massive Urbanization



City	1800	1900
London	900,000	4.7 Million
Paris	600,000	3.6 Million
Berlin	170,000	2.7 Million

- This mass exodus of people to cities changed the face of social world and posed several challenges:
 - Poor living conditions and lack of sanitation and drinking water
 - o Child labour, poverty, increased diseases
 - Longer working hours, insufficient wages
 - Overcrowding, pollution, noise, traffic
- Cities and Social Problems became synonymous during industrialization

Impact of Industrial Revolution on Sociology

- The upheaval and multiple social challenges that Industrial Revolution threw for society was of great interest to the first generation sociologist- Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, George Simmel.
- First major school of American Sociology- Chicago School interested in Cities as 'Urban Laboratories' (Louis Wirth, Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess)
- Focus on 'Social Engineering' To reform cities

