

Karl struggle between the capitalists and the



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Karl Marx was one of the most important thinkers of the 19th century.

, He wrote brilliantly on subjects such as philosophy, political science, economics and history. He never called himself a sociologist, but his work is very rich in sociological insights. Hence he is regarded as one of most profound and original sociological thinkers. His influence has been tremendous. Millions of people throughout the world accept his theories with almost religious fervour. Marx believed that the task of the social scientist was not merely to describe the world, it was to change it.

Whereas Spencer saw social harmony and the inevitability of progress, Marx saw social conflict and the inevitability of revolution. The key to history, he believed is class conflict — the bitter struggle between the capitalists and the labourers or between those who own the means of producing wealth and those who do not. Marx also believed that the historic struggle would end only with the overthrow of the ruling exploiters, and the establishment of a free, harmonious, classless society. Marx placed too much emphasis on the economic base of society.

Marx believed that the economic base of society influences the general character of all other aspects of culture and social structure, such as law, religion, education, government etc. Modern sociologists though reject many of the ideas of Marx, do generally recognise the fundamental influence of the economy on other areas of society. The ' conflict approach' to the study of social phenomena developed by Marx is still in currency. Later sociologists and social thinkers could hardly escape the influence of Marxian ideas and

theories. Good number of writers and thinkers still subscribe to his views and theories. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917): Prof.

Durkheim, the French thinker, like Spencer, considered societies as such to be important units of sociological analysis. He stressed the importance of studying different types of society comparatively. "Comparative Sociology is not a particular branch of sociology; it is sociology itself," he maintained. In Durkheim's theory the ultimate social reality is the group, not the individual.

Social life has to be analysed in terms of 'social facts', according to him. Social facts are nothing but collective ways of thinking, feeling and acting which though coming from the individual, "are external" to him and exert an external "constraint" or pressure on him. These social facts are the proper study of sociology and to them all social phenomena should be reduced, he opined. Further, each social fact, he felt, must be related "to a particular social milieu, to a definite type of society". Durkheim also mentioned various fields of sociological inquiry such as-General Sociology, 'Sociology of Religion, Sociology of Law and Morals, including sub-sections on political organisations, social organisation, marriage and family; The Sociology of Crime, Economic Sociology including sub-sections on measurement of value and occupational groups; Demography, including studies on urban and rural communities; and Sociology of Aesthetics. His major works are: The Division of Labour in Society, The Rules of Sociological Method, and Suicide.

The Elementary Forms of the Republic Life. Max Weber (1864-1920): Max Weber's approach is almost contrary to that of Durkheim. For Weber, the individual is the basic unit of society. . He opines that the finding of

sociological laws is but a means to understand man. In his system, sociological laws are “ empirically established probabilities or statistical generalisations of the course of social behaviour of which an interpretation can be given in terms of typical motives and intentions. Sociological method is a combination of inductive or statistical generalisation with verstehen (understanding) interpretation by the aid of an ideal type of behaviour, that is, assumed to be rationally or purposefully determined”.

Weber devoted much of his efforts to expound a special method called the method of understanding (verstehen) for the study of social phenomena. He stressed the importance of maintaining objectivity and neutrality of value-judgments in social sciences. He wrote much on such topics as religion; various aspects of economic life, including money and the division of labour, political parties and other forms of political organisation and authority; bureaucracy and other varieties of large-scale organisation; class and caste; the city; and music.

His influence on contemporary sociologists especially that of analytic school is rapidly increasing. His major works are: Economics and Society, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, The City, Bureaucracy and various other books and essays.