

# Social thought and social change



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The society is a dynamic entity, and societies keep on changing from one time to another. People in the society have to find an effective way of adapting to these changes, while failing to do so makes them unfit for society. The society must change, and people have no option, but to keep on changing with the society. Over a long period, scholars have sought to find out the nature of the societies and the changes that occur in these societies, and they have concluded that a lot of theories exist to explain these changes. These theories are just some explanations since a lot of people have different views over the issue. The societies as well as people are dynamic; they are guided by different thoughts in life.

#### The enlightenment and social change

The notion of enlightenment has been used to describe the freedom to use an individual's own intellect. This means that the person has the freedom to express his thoughts freely. Therefore, a person can have his own criticism of ideas that were previously indisputable. These ideas include the criticisms of religion, the prevailing value of science and reason, an obligation to social advancement, and the implication of uniqueness. On the other hand, social change refers to any modification in the norms, ideas, values, social habits, and social roles of the populace. It can also include ideas about the composition or structure of the society.

Therefore, it can be deduced that enlightenment leads to social change, since an enlightened person undergoes intellectual transformation. This transformation is indispensable in the process of social transformation in that the values acquired during enlightenment will reflect themselves in the life

of the individual. An enlightened individual has no choice, but to articulate the values acquired; he suggests these values to the society, and society can transform. The society can change accordingly, but this can take a very long time. However, the society absorbs these changes, and after some time an enlightened individual manages to change the whole society.

Enlightenment brings a lot of ideas to the society, and people in the society are put in a position that makes them examine the social structure. For instance, people get to doubt the social structure that has been set in all spheres of life, and the society has to explain these situations. Therefore, enlightenment helps people to be conscious of the societal affairs, and consequently, authorities can amend any misdeeds. Such circumstances pressure authorities to explain some fundamentals of the society, which, in turn, forces people to adapt to social changes. People are also in a position to appreciate and take responsibilities in the society as a result of social enlightenment. This stems from the fact that people get to understand their position as agents of transformation in the society, and they are willing to take this role. Therefore, an enlightened person is more inclined to adapt to social changes, since the enlightenment makes a person conscious of the need of the society to change and serve humanity well.

#### Stages of history and progress

The process of social transformation is a continuous process that has gone past many challenging periods. Social change has gone through a lot of stages, and these stages are characterized by the need to move from one

aspect of social stratification to the other. This process has been met by a lot of big challenges.

There are different historical stages that have marked changes in society. First, the era of survival is rather crucial, since it is the initial stage of any change. During this period, people get the ideas about changes that should exist in the society. Then, these people start designing models that can be used to articulate and introduce such thoughts in the society. This stage is marked by a lot of challenges. The society is not ready for these changes, and the pioneer of the changes faces a lot of social rejection.

The conceived idea then goes to the next stage of growth, and the ideas conceived are introduced to the society. Some people agree to these changes, but, as expected, other people reject such ideas. This brings a lot of conflicts. Consequently, people seek to find the truth about the proposed changes, and they start supporting the new ideas. People start examining their current system and start seeing the flaws as a result of the introduction of new system. Therefore, they start supporting the new system, and at this stage, a lot of debates arise; people seek to make the proposed changes as to how to transform society.

The process of social change then moves to a rapid stage of social development. In this stage, people seek to introduce the ideas conceived, and they make these ideas a guiding rule. People have already accepted the ideas, and they are ready to adapt to all the changes. They are also ready to accept any resultant problems and take full responsibility for the system.

During the subsequent age of evolution, new changes are introduced to the society. These changes resemble the same process as in previous stages, while the society continues to be dynamic. The world has transformed a lot socially over the eras, and it has followed similar steps. The changes introduced in the 19th century experienced a transformation in the 20th century, while continuing to transform in the 21st. Therefore, changes continue occurring, and this marks the dynamism of the society.

### Legal-rational authority and bureaucracy

The society must have a set of guiding rules in order to thrive. However, the rules that govern people's lives in the society are designed on the basis of some principles. For instance, people can follow a democracy, monarchy, or they can follow a bureaucratic system. Bureaucracy means that power comes from a centralized point, and people are expected to follow this centralized rule.

Many scholars have grouped the two terms, Legal-Rational Authority and Bureaucracy, together. According to a sociologist, Max Weber, bureaucracy comes from a process of rationalization which is a product of the legal-rational structure of authority. Weber was concerned with understanding some prevalent social actions and the effects that these systems had on the modern Western civilization. He identified a new social process called rational action, where the action characterizes the modern society and its institutions. Rationalization leads to a form of authority known as the legal-rational authority. This authority appears in the modern societies.

However, the authority required some new ways of organizing systems, which would be attuned to the rationalist principles. Max Weber identified these modern organizational bodies as bureaucracies. Therefore, according to Weber, rationalism is the hallmark of the modern society. People's behaviors and actions were distinguished, and actions are said to be those aspects that carry attached meanings. Conversely, behavior includes those actions that do not carry any meanings.

### The division of labor and social solidarity

In any society, social solidarity is a result of many factors that must work together. One of these factors has to do with the division of labor. Thus, people feel attached to each other when they are subjected to the same conditions. Therefore, the division of labor has to be fair for a solidified society.

People, when placed under the same situations, feel a bond. They share some common experiences, and, therefore, the bonds between these people will strengthen, which will lead to a society built on the foundation of solidarity. These people face the same challenges, and as a result, they will ensure that their relationships are steady. These people understand each other; they understand each other's weaknesses and strengths, and above all, they understand each other's plight in life. Therefore, these people will remain close to each other, and they will ensure that they support each other. As a result of this solidarity, people will push for their rights in a unified manner.

On the other hand, people who are subjected to different working conditions remain distant to each other. They have conflicting policies over a wide variety of things, and they have different perspectives of life. For instance, these people are divided in terms of laws that govern important aspects of life such as politics. Therefore, people with different working conditions will have different political views. They will likely vote for different political candidates, since they will feel that a candidate with similar experience will address their challenges in an effective manner.

Therefore, in order to maintain social solidarity, the authorities must ensure that people are subjected to similar working conditions. This way, people will feel that they are not being oppressed, and they will work without feeling threatened. This will make a society that cares for the good of all people.