

Based by this theory  
applied it to the



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Based on their limited observations, inaccurate and unconfirmed information and unqualified imagination they argued that there was a universal evolutionary process.

They claimed that all societies passed through a number of stages beginning in primitive origins and culminating in civilisation of the Western type. L. H.

Morgan, for example, believed that there were three basic stages in the process: savagery, barbarism and civilisation. Even Auguste Comte's ideas relating to the three stages in the development of human thought and also of society namely - the theological, the metaphysical and the positive - in a way, represent the three basic stages of social change. This evolutionary view of social change was highly influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of 'Organic Evolution' Those who were fascinated by this theory applied it to the human society and argued that societies must have evolved from the too simple and primitive to that of too complex and advanced such as the western society. Herbert Spencer, a British sociologist, carried this analogy to its extremity.

He argued that society itself is an organism. He even applied Darwin's principle of "the survival of the fittest" to human societies. He said that society has been gradually progressing, towards a better state. He argued that it has evolved from military society to the industrial society. He claimed that Western races, classes or societies had survived and evolved because they were better adapted to face the conditions of life.

This view, known as Social Darwinism, got widespread popularity in the late 19th Century. It survived even during the first phase of the 20th Century.

Emile Durkheim identified the cause of societal evolution as a society's increasing "moral density". "Durkheim viewed societies as changing in the direction of greater differentiation, interdependence and formal control under the pressure of increasing moral density". He advocated that societies have evolved from a relatively undifferentiated social structure with minimum of division of labour and with a kind of solidarity called 'mechanical solidarity' to a more differentiated social structure with maximum division of labour giving rise to a kind of solidarity called 'Organic Solidarity'. Evaluation of the Evolutionary Theory: The early evolutionary doctrines were readily accepted because they served the colonial interests of Europeans. This theory provided a convenient justification for colonial rule over primitive peoples.

"The enforced spread of western culture was conveniently thought of as "the white man's burden" - the thankless but noble task of bringing "higher" forms of civilisation to "inferior" peoples". Those who supported this theory had no concept of cultural relativity and hence judged other cultures purely in terms of their own culture's standards. The unilinear evolutionary theories described but did not explain social change. They have not given any convincing explanation of how or why societies should evolve toward the western pattern.

The theories were based on the faulty interpretations of the data. "Different theorists grouped vastly different cultures into misleading categories so that they would fit into the various 'stages' of evolution". (Ian Robertson) The theorists in an ethnocentric way treated the trends in western civilisation as "progress". They largely stressed the importance of economic and

technological changes in development and neglected other aspects. Thus, the non-westerners may regard western cultures as technologically more advanced, yet morally backward. Further, the recent ethnographic data from primitive societies have proved that the societies need not follow the same step by step evolutionary sequence. In fact, societies have developed in different ways, often by borrowing ideas and innovations from other societies. Ex: The Bushmen of the Kalahari and the aborigines of Australia are being introduced directly to industrial society.

Hence they are skipping the 'stage' which the theorists have spoken of. The modern anthropologists have tended to support the theory of multilinear evolution rather than the unilinear one. Modern anthropologists like Steward agree that this evolutionary process is multilinear. It can take place in many different ways and change need not necessarily follow the same pattern everywhere. They do not press the analogy between societies and living organisms. They do not equate change with progress. They do not assume that greater social complexity produces greater human happiness.

This theory is becoming relatively more popular in social anthropological circles today.