

Functionalism: sociology and social order

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The functionalist model of how society works has many limitations and few strengths. " Explain and also asses this view. By Sadhana sanba In the study of sociology, functionalist perspective is a view of society that focuses on the way various parts of society have functions and live in a ' consensus' that maintain the stability and social order of the whole. Functionalist model of how society works tends to focus to be an organized, stable, well integrated system , in which most members agree on basic values which is as called' ' value consensus'.

However, functionalist theory alongside the other school of theories such as marxism (conflict theory) and interactionism is criticized for having many limitations of explaining the social phenomenon of its working. Herbert spencer an early functionalist and later emile Durkheim compares the working of society to the organic analogy and the way a biological organisms works. Any organisms has a structure- that is , a set of inter-related components, such as head, limbs, a heart lungs and so on.

Each of these parts has functions - that is a positive and need consequence for the whole system. In the same way, spencer argued , a society has structure. Its inter-related parts are family, religion, values and norms, social elements and so on. Ideally, hence, each of these components also has a function that contributes to the overall stability of social system. However, the analogy has many . limits. it is difficult for example to compare the way organisms grow to the way society grows and change. Is there a social equivalent to the DNA the genetic program present in every species?

Does a society really have a series of complementary institution together to make the whole function smoothly to the mutual benefit of all? Although,
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Modern-structural-functionalism does not press the analogy between a society and an organism and has subsequently been much refined and modified, however, the functionalist view of how society works still has few strength only Talcott Parson(1951) argues that any society has four functional needs or pre-requisites that need to be met for it to survive: these are adaptation , goal attainment, integration and latency (AGIL).

However , his model of society's working has been havily criticized for being bland abd fruitless by the way arsons went about examining society. Parsons also tried to show how consensus based on shared values is essential to social order. He also concluded that the stratified system is crucial in mainting consensus in society which, in the other way, conflict theory of karl marx describes as ' inequality'.

Parsons and Durkheim evidently saw social inequality ' stratification' as a necessary and universal feature of society and that inequality could be mitigated by the prevalence of social mobility completely disregarding the fact that social inquality in a society is a key source of social conflict and dominancy. Also, the functional view of assuming the existence of a meritocratic society i. e, a society where everyone has a equal chance og achieving high social status and reward is not contextual.

This kind of role and effects only works if many other features of society are ignored and even distorted.. here, Melvin Tumin (1953) argues that how and why are some social position assumed to be functionally more important than others ? Who decided and how ? The concept of ' functional satisfication is value laden and deciding which postions are functionally more important than others cannot be done objectively for example the payment that the

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top football stars in the UK and the earnings of the prime minister in the same country. The players earn six times more than the political figure.

Hence, society always cannot be induced by the material rewards and functional theory maybe dysfunctional and damaging it may generate conflict and antagonism between social strata rather than furthering social integration to which Weberian view explains the dynamics of stratification in modern society with existence of conflicts between owners and workers creating white collar and blue collar workers. Functional view of creating social order an important model of society, has been criticized for its limitation on the fact that it serves only the selfish ambitions of the rich and powerful.

As Durkheim believes that society is in its essence its moral codes. The rules and order, the degree competitiveness between people and governmental conducts help to cement and build social order he called them the mechanical and organic principles of solidarity. The description of 'mechanical solidarity and 'organic solidarity' provides insights about the basic way of forming social order in society which in fact Max Weber argues is more applicable and impliable only in the industrial complex societies and is criticized by Marx for disregarding the poor, economically weak and 'proletariat' as in his words, society.

Hence, the phenomenon of 'collective conscience' and 'value consensus' the functionalist theory implies in one way or other inherently conservative that is focused only on a particular social theme. It does not consider that order and conflict exist side by side and as Marx says is achieved through the domination by the few over the many, and that domination is possible

because it reflects the economic circumstances of the groups which is constantly unstable as it is based on equality and continuing conflict of interest between those who own the means of production and who don't.

In the same way interactionist view of how society works emphasizes that members of societies are not just constrained in their everyday lives by moral codes or by economic relationships but that each individual are actors in each situation they negotiate or confront to which is also simplifiably said 'situational interaction' Hence, functionalist perspective is limited with logical problem it embraces, if something in society is recurrent, functionalist say that it must be meeting a need.

Functionalism lacks any real power to explain social change or changes. It leans heavily towards describing society in a stable condition and seems to emphasize the status- quo: the media reflect all views, women are domestically oriented, marriages are happy, all individualist are ladened by values and norms that they internalize confining into it to create social order and so on.

Functionalist risk the temptation of dismissing disruptive changes as dysfunctional, even if those changes are necessary, inevitable and beneficial in the long run However functionalist theory perspective is useful in explaining the functions or consequences, that a given element has in society which contribute the stability of the social system as a whole and hence, therefore, insights human beings of their existence and role in a society. Posted byingsamaat9: 06 AM 1 comment: 1. BuzzerOctober 9, 2011 9: 31 AM It really helped me a lot. ReplyDelete Add comment