

First unit: The origins and development of sociology

1. Definition of sociology:

Sociology is one of the social sciences (economics, politics, psychology, anthropology ...etc) that separated from “philosophy” the mother science. The separation was in an effort to find a subject matter and a working methodology all based on the understanding of the individuals’ behavior within society’s frame and social phenomena analysis. Notably though, a unified definition had not yet been advanced by scholars and thinkers regardless of their orientations and intellectual affiliations. On that fact, a set of the most important definitions is presented, out of which is:

The term (SOCIOLOGIE) was first coined by **Auguste Comte** in 1839 in his course of “**Positive Philosophy**” text 47, which he originally called “**Social Physics**”. The course was devised in such a way to present a new science whose subject matter is the study of social facts, as they constitute a distinct reality with its own distinct laws, as is the case for physical or biological facts (Dortier & Cabin, 2000, p.17). He originally called it “Social Physics” in an attempt to situate it and give it status among the natural and the material sciences.

As for **Max Weber**, who defined it as “**the science whose object is to interpret the meaning of social action and thereby give a causal explanation of the way in which the action proceeds and the effects which it produces**”. The “action” here whether external or internal, abandonment or acceptance is a human behavior ... the social action must be that which meaning follows the intentions of the agent or agents with relations to others’ behavior, and its succession is directed accordingly (Weber, 2011, pp. 28-29).

Alternatively, **Émile Durkheim** defined it as a science that studies “**social phenomena**” as he was singular in defining the characteristics of social

phenomena as social research basis by relying on the functional aspect that preserves the social order and its stability (Al-Tufaili, 2007, p.12).

A number of contemporary scholars and thinkers made attempts to define sociology that are summarized in the following:

James Vander Zanden states that sociology is distinguished in being a science that studies “**human interaction**”, which is reflected in the reciprocal influence that individuals exercise in their reciprocal relations., and the influence involve the feelings, the trends, and actions. Additionally, sociologists are also interested in the recurring ways through which individuals form their relationships. The later allows the creation and development of the various forms of social ties. Sociologists also concern themselves with the maintenance methods of these relationships and ties that in turn ensure either their continuity or their change or dissolution.

Regarding **McGee and his colleagues**, they adopted such a definition of sociology meaning the science that “**studies the social system**”. The social system concept refers to that organized pattern according to which human affairs are carried out, starting from the simplest cooperative relationships, for instance a stranger helping and offering assistance, to organized groups sharing both the speaking language as well as the political position for generations and perhaps centuries. Meaning of the social system extends more to include the behavioral rules and the laws acquired and learned by individuals through social participation.

Lucile Duberman and Clayton Hartjen provided another definition to sociology meaning “**a science that studies human behavior**”. Contrary to the other social sciences, it concerns itself with all aspects of human behavior in a specific social situation. Accordingly, sociologists study the ways in which societies are formed and individuals behave within the frame of the diverse social structures. In a striving effort to understand how human groups assemble and

integrate, how they separate and diverge, and why and under what conditions the integration or the separation occurs, sociologists also focus on the changes that take place in human societies and the degree of acceptance, assimilation, rejection, and resistance of those changes (Ouda, p.18).

2. Circumstances surrounding the emergence of sociology

The Arab thinker, AbdArrahman Ibn Khaldoun, preceded the scholar AugusteCompte in establishing and developing sociology in the Arab world by four (04) centuries. When he was producing a number of historical books, he realized the necessity for a certain method that helps distinguish truthfulness from untruthful of historical accounts. Then, he was devoted to the discussion of the humanistic urban natures and the laws of human grouping in his famous introduction, in which he addressed most of the social issues and problems that sociology addresses today and called it “**the science of human urbanism**”. Coinciding with the fall of the Arabic-Islamic civilization and the rise of western, the works of Ibn Khaldoun were not destined for neither connectivity nor continuity. Adding to that, the linguistic and cultural barriers that delayed the Western thinker’s access to Ibn Khaldoun’s works. Therefore, the emergence of sociology in the west was independent from that of the east; hence, the inception of western sociology was attributed to Auguste Comte. As it was also closely linked to the transformation of the economic, social, cultural, and political conditions that the European society was undergoing in all its directions and branches (Ouda, p.71)

Sociology emerged as a branch of science and knowledge at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century was characterized by profound transformations, especially in Europe, more especially the political transformations illustrated in the “French Revolution” in 1789. The revolution led to the collapse of the old system where the church was in control of minds, politics, and social

affairs. The French revolution advocated for legal equality among citizens and demanded the revision of the political system's foundations, which was no longer subject to the sole will of the king. As for the economic and social changes, they were linked to the industrial revolution, which was in the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth. Originating first in Great Britain and gradually spread to the other European countries and then the United States and Japan.

The aforementioned period was characterized by the transitioning from the rural to the urban society. A fact that led to profound change in the existing social structures, such as village solidarity and the set of customs, traditions, and social practices where Ferdinand Tönnies pointed the confliction of two social organization patterns. The first predominantly characterized by traditional ties, affection, and community spirit that mainly focus on family and local solidarity. Meanwhile, the second leans more towards individual interest, calculations, and impersonal relationships and seeks imposition within the industrial society (Retor, 2015, p.18).

The significant transformation in the social phenomena interpretation and analysis began after the birth of nineteenth century that employed scientific methods to extrapolate both behavior and social phenomena. Only the scientific method is capable of answering the raised questions based on facts collected by the organized research. Consequently to this new research method, there was the emergence of an important science dubbed "Sociology" (Al-Azzawi et al., 2006, p.16).

3. Key developments in the emergence of sociology

The emergence of sociology can be classified into three key developments that are interchangeably and closely linked. The developments interchanged effect

and affect throughout the European history; extending from the old feudal society collapse to the modern bourgeois society. The developments are detailed as follows:

3.1 Social and economic developments

Social and economic developments that paved the way for the sociology emergence is displayed in the rise of the capitalist industrial society on the ruins of the old feudal society. The shift resulted in a number of social phenomena and issues summarized in the following:

- Emergence of the industrial city that replaced the village, which was the heart of the feudal society. After the industrial revolution's explosion, came the industrial shift, appearance of the modern factories, and the countless employment opportunities, and the cities became attraction centers to the countryside workforce.
- Subsequently, followed the increase of countryside to city migration, which led to class emergence in the cities. The class emergence was the result of a certain group owning factories, establishments, and capital while the other group selling manpower in order to improve their living conditions. Hence, tension, anxiety, and conflict feuded between the two groups or classes.
- The emergence of industrial city related issues reflected in poverty, crowding, underdeveloped areas ...etc. Hereby the social thinking was at the obligation to study and resolve such issues through diagnosis and analysis.

3.2 Intellectual and philosophical developments

The abovementioned social and economic developments were accompanied by intellectual and philosophical developments as the new bourgeois industrial society began to practice intellectual and philosophical methods to vindicate for his

position and continuity. The development began with the emergence of the Protestant doctrine in defiance of the Catholic Church at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century. A change known as the Age of Enlightenment that liberated minds from the controlling grasp of the Catholic Church. The following points highlight the role of the Enlightenment philosophy in the elimination of the old society and paving the way for the new:

- One's rationality and awareness of his best interest as well as his guidance of history and society to his advantage.
- One's victory over the social systems that restricted him from reaching the golden age.
- Basing the legitimacy of criticism on the standard of reason, and holding nothing else as sacred that could prevent that.
- Standing the legitimacy of the revolution and change. As long as the mind is liberated through criticism and scrutiny, it has the right to rebel against any social conditions deemed illogical or irrational.

3.3 Political developments

Political developments that began in France were represented by the "French Revolution" that is considered to be the first ideological revolution in history. The revolution was based on such concepts as the Enlightenment philosophy and the revolution against the social systems that were left behind by the old feudal system. Naturally, many problems would arise in this frenzy of social deconstruction and construction, which would require interpretation and treatment. A fact that made some believe that Auguste Comte, the founder of Western sociology in France, had a certain mission with this new science that is to reform the social conditions that were corrupted by the revolution, or the social reconstruction on the basis of

scientific research and positive thinking far from impulsive, revolutionary enthusiasm.

4. Aims of sociology

Sociology using the scientific method in studying society came in order to study social phenomena in an objective manner, just as the natural phenomena. Therefore, this science, in its various studies, aims to achieve a number of goals that the founders as well as the contemporaries worked best and are still striving to achieve (Abdul Jawad, pp. 26-27), and the goals are:

A - Study facts and phenomena, to determine their elements and constituents as well as to know the general principles of social life and the pillars on which they are based.

B - Study the origin of facts and social phenomena, and the developments they have undergone over the ages. In addition to the factors that led to and helped this development because social phenomena advance and change with both time and place change.

C - Study the functions of social phenomena and the development of these functions over time, their variations from one place to another, as each phenomenon has its own function. The phenomenon of marriage, for instance, regulates the relationship between men and women, reproduction, etc... The function of politics regulates the relationship between the individual, state and among states.

D - Research into social relationships and the various links; identify the extent of interaction that occurs between individuals, groups, and others, along with the relationships in-between phenomena ...etc.

E- Study the relationships and interchangeable influences between individuals, human groups, and the conditions of the natural and geographical environment.

F - Finally, sociology aims to reveal the social laws and theories that social phenomena are subject to, either in their origin, emergence, change, development, or their interchangeable effects. A reality that gives sociology objectivity and scientificity.

5. The relationship of sociology with other sciences

Student of the social sciences is well aware that there are no dividing boundaries between them, as is the case with the natural and exact sciences. To varying degrees, there is an interconnection between them on the one hand, and uses among them on the other. Because of this fact, they contribute, more or less, to understanding society in its origins, development, and changes that occur across time and space to the point that it is not possible to separate them whether it is economic, political, psychological, and even anthropological and philosophical.

5.1 The relationship of sociology with philosophy

Sociology emerged in the first quarter of the nineteenth century in Europe in an arena of conflicting, opposing philosophical currents that preceded and accompanied the collapse of the old social system (feudalism) and the rise of the new social system (capitalism). Philosophical currents that started from the Enlightenment logic, such as critical philosophies, or the opposing ones, such as the conservative romantic philosophical current. If this has any indication, it indicates that sociology has a closely linked to the moral and political philosophies since its inception. Despite this link, there are difference points out of which are:

- On the goals of every science, philosophy seeks to achieve what it envisions as final or absolute truths to objects, phenomena, civilization, the universe, and

even absolute, final human values and existence as a whole. As for science, its goal is defined by relative truths and does not acknowledge the existence of absolute truths or final causes. On that, the philosopher's question is as ambitious and the scientist's question is as modest.

- On the ways to reach these goals, philosophy assumes priori perceptions or generalizations that are formed in the mind of the philosopher that he tends to concretely apply them, as put by some. The concrete application is based on the logic of philosophical thinking that starts from the general to the particular. As for science, it believes in objective experience that is based on both observation and its recording in the various, accurate measurement methods. Science exercises the observation and recording starting from the postulates of scientific logic, which is characterized by objective existence independent of our subjective perceptions. Therefore, scientific knowledge begins from the specifics to reach the generalizations.

5.2 The relationship of sociology with psychology

In a way or in another, it is challenging enough to separate sociology from psychology as is to separate the individual from society. Although psychology studies the individual as a distinct psychological character or entity while sociology studies groups, societies, and social historical systems. The individuals as active actors in the historical movement are the ones who create social systems and civilizations.

Nonetheless, there are those who try to highlight separately the interests of each science. Psychology is concerned with the individual's sinner world, that is, the mental and psychological processes that take place within the individual, such as perception, remembering, imagination, and emotion, in addition to the pathological manifestations of these processes. However, sociology is mainly concerned with

the individual's outer world, that is, his relationship and interaction with others, and his relationships with social and cultural groups and systems.

However, the relationship between psychology and sociology is close one, and the closeness between the two sciences is evident in the branch of “**social psychology**”, which is concerned with the study of behavior, personality, and the social environment influences. That is because behavior can only be understood in its social context while social reality is often attributed to the psychological dimension.

5.3 The relationship of sociology with history

History is a science that studies non-recurring human events related to a specific time and place while sociology studies the recurring patterns of human events. Although they might deal with the same topic, they differ in the aim and study angle. For instance, revolution as a qualitative social change could be a common research topic between sociology and history, yet sociology is more interested in the recurring and repeating aspects of this social phenomenon regardless of time, place, or specificity. Sociology studies separate revolutions that occurred in separate places and different times but not in the aim of discovering the common pattern between all revolutions. The aim is reaching a generalization on “the social, economic and political motives of the revolution as a human act”. As for the historian, he tracks the revolution as a whole with its circumstances, events, unique pattern, and prominent figures in order to record the revolution as a unique, non-reoccurring human event. Alternatively, he is interested in the French Revolution as a French revolution and the Russian Revolution as a Russian revolution...etc. (Ouda, p. 36)

About the two sciences interchangeable benefit, sociology provides for the historian the social vision that enables him to envision events and news in their

natural social context. Sociology provides him also with concepts, quotes, and methodological tools, such as the concept of social power, authority, class, category, change, stability, conflict, and quotes among others concepts. The historian with a social insight utilizes these concepts in events' observation and analysis, from the one hand.

From the other hand, the sociologist with a historical sense and vision is one that perceives society as a historical phenomenon, which is the correct commencement point for studying society and any partial social phenomenon (contrary to the positivist and functional trends). In this case, he fundamentally relies on the historical material, which is his own, personal product, related to the social phenomenon formed in a historical context, from one side. From the other side, the historical material is a historical phenomenon in itself; therefore, returning to its historical roots in order to be perceived in its true context is inescapable. The pre-detailed dependency is evident in the works of the pioneer sociologists. (Ouda, 38)

5.4 The relationship of sociology with politics

Traditionally, the political science focused on two important fields: political theory that concerns itself with the study of opinions regarding government and its concrete forms. The second field is government administration that concerns itself with the comprehensive structural description of government bodies and their functions, with a special emphasis on the interconnection of the two (Al-Ghazawi et al., 2006, p. 34).

Sociologists have realized that the political system's independent study will not result in a clear and complete theoretical conception. The relationship between the political system and the other social systems that constitute society must be comprehended, which led to the emergence of an independent science linking the

two sciences together that is “**political sociology**”. Political sociology concerns itself with the analysis of political behavior and political systems as well as studying the social interaction involved in government actions in the light of the social structure and the prevailing culture (Al-Ghazawi et al., 2006, 35).

Perhaps there are many faces to political science’s benefit from sociology, such as comprehending elections’ voting issues, political participation, citizenship, political systems, and political issues... etc., because of the comprehending and analysis difficulty it faces when performed out of its social frame.

5.5 The relationship of sociology with economics

The aims of economics is to "study production, distribution, consumption volume, and services". Economists are also interested in the study of prices, taxes, and the affecting factors. Accordingly, Economics is considered to be the most advanced social science because it often measures its topics with more simplicity than the others as economists, for their research, interpretations, and predictions, have developed complex mathematical tools. (Al-Ghazawi et al., 2006, p. 33).

Still, economy is part of society as goods and services are not produced, marketed, or consumed by themselves. The mentioned social aspects of the economic life are the subject of a specialty that combines economy and society that is “**economic sociology**”. Economic sociology concerns itself with the study of the social aspects of life and economic practices; providing a clear picture of the interchangeable relationships that affect and link it to the context of the social life. Many sociologists were interested in the economic life, such as “Emile Durkheim”, who studied the division of labor and the organic cohesion of society, and “Max Weber”, who provided a whole book on the Protestantism and capitalism as economic systems.