

THE ORIGINS OF SOCIOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The inquiry into the origin of sociology as a discipline is the central quest of this paper. Diverse scholars have given divergent opinions about the origin and development of sociology in the west. They have tried to give accounts of the history and development of sociology in the west. The aim of this paper would be to give justice to the sociological investigation and interpretation. This paper looks into the philosophical roots, the historical accounts, the evolutionary theories and the various socio-political reforms of the origin and development of sociology in the west. The paper also gives accounts of the scholars who contributed towards the origin and development of sociology in the west. This paper would be a significant contribution to knowledge production. It has given a wider overview of the origin of sociology in the west. It has not just focused on the historicity of the sociological emergence. But, understands the origin of sociology in a more holistic and systematic way.

Keyword: Origin, Sociology, West, Discipline, Critical, Discourse, Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

We always begin with Comte to understand the origin of sociology in the west. Off course, Auguste Comte¹ was the first scholar who coined the term sociology in the academic discourse. Earlier he used the term social physics for sociology. But, later for more conceptual clarity of the subject, he used the word sociology. In his

first writing, "Positive philosophy", which he wrote in between 1830-1842, had discussed the law of three stages; Theological², Metaphysical³ and Positivist⁴. Comte's main aim was to understand human thinking in different capacities. As a trained philosopher and peace lover, Comte was always trying to find out the reasons to understand the human complex mind and rational society. The renaissance and enlightenment period rejected all kinds of unscientific claims and were looking for more verifiable facts. The enlightenment which started around the 15th century in Europe and captured the entire west in the 17th and 18th century had become a reactionary to the society. Comte's sociology came in the late 18th century and lasts till the mid of 19th century.

During the 18th century, there were growing debates on the science and the social sciences. The social thinkers were trying to understand the complicated nature of society, the growing problem of individualism. But, most of the thinkers were confused about the scientific temperament of the disciplines. French philosopher and social thinker Claude Henri Saint Simon were of the believer of positivist sociology and wanted to use the same method which science was using. Comte's worked as a secretary under Simon and had remained close association. Later, Comte emphasized more on the scientific principles to understand the complex nature of society.

Other social thinkers who contributed to the origin and growth of sociology in the west are Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, and Max Weber.

¹ Comte is also known as the founding father of the discipline, Sociology.

² Means the belief in the supernatural world & there was no scope for logic.

³ Means when the consciousness starts developing in human being and they try to understand the natural world.

⁴ Means discourse in terms of scientific facts and verifiable evidence.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many scholars who had written about the origin and growth of sociology in the west. But, least has given detailed accounts of the emergence of sociology. A number of scholars⁵ have exaggerated the causes of the origin and development of sociology as a discipline. There are various scholars who had written or have been associated with the emergence of sociology in the west. The *first* part of the literature review deals with the classical thinkers who have contributed in origin of sociology as a discipline in the west. *Second*, it deals with those social thinkers who have written on the emergence and the growth of the discipline sociology in the west.

Auguste Comte (1798-1857): Comte was the first French social thinker who contributed to the emergence of sociology in the west. It's due to Comte's efforts sociology as a discipline came into existence. He was very much influenced by positivism and in his sociological writings, positive influence has greatly impacted.

Karl Marx (1818-1883): Marx was a German philosopher and prolific scholar. He had given sociology a different shape. Marx interest developed in conflict sociology due to his association with many workers' organizations and was raising their voice against the capitalist social order. Therefore, class conflict and social change became the central concepts of his social and academic writings. In sociology, Marx is known for conflict perspective.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903): British biologist Spencer's organic analogy and his evolutionary approach became significant in the understanding of both social and natural sciences in sociology. He argues that like an organism, society also has various parts that function for the maintenance of the entire social system.

Emile Durkheim⁶ (1858-1917): Like Auguste Comte, Durkheim helped the sociology to understand the structure and function of the society. He understood sociology through a functionalist approach and

perspective. Durkheim's book, "The Rules of Sociological Method" published in the year 1895 became the subject matter of sociology and this established sociology as a positivist social science. Durkheim explained the concept, "Social Facts" in the book, "The Rules of Sociological Method", which he means external, constraint and coercive to an individual. According to Durkheim, "A *Social fact is to be recognized by the coercive power which it exercises or is capable of exercising over individuals; and the presence of this power is, in turn, to be recognized by sanction or by the resistance which this fact opposes to every endeavor which tends to do violence to it*" (Durkheim, 1966: 10).

Georg Simmel (1858-1918): Simmel a German philosopher, contributed in the field of philosophy and conflict sociology. He basically viewed society through micro aspect. Therefore, he is known as a micro sociologist. He helped in the understanding of symbolic interaction and the exchange theory.

"Robert Nisbet (1959) presents this view of Simmel's contribution to sociology. *It is the micro-sociological character of Simmel's work that may always give him an edge in timeless over the other pioneers. He did not disdain the small and the intimate elements of human association, or did he ever lose sight of the primacy of human beings, of concrete individuals, in his analysis of institutions* (Ritzer, 2011:152).

Max Weber (1864-1920): Weber was a German Sociologist. He received his doctorate in Political Economy. His work on the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism is considered as most relevant in the present time. In 1904 and 1905 he published his one of the best-known work, "The protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" was based on the relationship between capitalism and religion and also published the methodology of social sciences.

C. Wright Mills⁷ (1916-1962) "*Sociological Imagination*" (1959) contributes to the subject matter of sociology. It introduces us with critical and unbiased thinking. Sociological Imagination is all about thought and action while doing any social research. It helps us to

⁵ In Classical Sociology, from Comte to Weber.

⁶ Durkheim is known as the professional father of sociology.

⁷ He belongs to the American sociology and influenced by the conflict perspective in sociology.

understand the entire social structure. He argues that there is a need to connect an individual's problems with the wider social issues in order to understand the real cause behind such problems and to would try to solve them.

Peter L. Berger (1929-2017) in *"Invitation to Sociology"*, published in the year 1963, stressed more on the critical approach to understanding the nature and scope of the discipline. Berger argues that history and philosophy both plays a significant role in the shaping of sociological sense. Berger also argues about the scientific tool and techniques while carrying forward any sociological research. This book helps to understand the discipline boundaries of sociology.

George Ritzer (1940-) an American sociologist, in his book, 'Sociological Theory' (2011) have discussed the classical and modern sociological thought. This book has given detailed accounts of the work and contributions of sociological thinkers begin from Comte's 'Positive Sociology' to the Bourdieu's 'Reflexive sociology'.

3.CONTEXT

The aim of this paper is to explore more systematic accounts of the origin of sociology as a discipline. Discipline means how sociology discourse has been seen relevant in both academics and research in the west. It also looks into how the different intellectual capacities help in the emergence of sociology in the west. After the coming of the enlightenment period, many conservative groups had reacted to its basic principle. These radical groups were against the scientific nature of society. Therefore, social thinkers from various countries in the west protested against such conservative groups by writing on class, religion, bureaucracy, human the thinking, the positive society, etc. There is tremendous literature available on the history of the emergence of sociology in the west, but, most of the writings have given just accounts than an embedded exploration of it. This paper explores all the factors responsible for the origin of sociology as a discipline in the west. Therefore, the present paper understands the entire circumstances due to which sociology came into existence as well as how sociology developed as a discipline in the west. It also looks into

the contribution made by scholars in the origin and growth of the discipline.

4.METHODOLOGY

This paper has been prepared on the basis of secondary literature. The work of Comte, Spencer, Marx, Durkheim, Simmel has been reviewed in order to produce concrete facts to understand more systematically about the origin of sociology in the west. It also understood those social thinkers who have contributed to the shaping of discipline boundaries. The historical sociological approach has been used to look into the contributions made by social thinkers and the nature of European societies during the 17th and 18th century. The comparative method has been used to compare and contrast the literature published by the social thinkers, methodology and the theory adopted and the subject matter of sociology with the other social sciences. It also discusses the origin of sociology as a discipline in the west. In this paper, the discussion has been made with critical discourse analysis to understand both the scholarly and external factors in the shaping of the discipline sociology in the west.

5.A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Europe witnessed a drastic change at the beginning of the 17th century. The conservative part of religion was challenged by secular minds. People began their demonstrations against the monarchy and the heads of the religious institutions. The reason was to establish a scientific temperament and the secular nature of society. Also, a democratic set up was need of that time. Therefore, the enlightenment period that begins in Europe during the 15th century has changed the nature of society during the 17th and the 18th century. Simultaneously, there were going on debates between social sciences and science. The scientific belief was trying to dominate every kind of illogical thinking. The social sciences like history, political science, economics, has a long history that goes back to the 500 A.D. Scholars like Herodotus, Aristotle, Kautilya had contributed enormously during the 5th century to understand the nature and function of society. On the other, the impact of twin revolutions i.e., French Revolution (1789) and the Industrial Revolution (1760) was such huge that disturbed the entire social order of

European society. But, during the 19th century, various social and intellectual forces helped Europe to understand the societal disorder and transformative society. The emergence of sociology as a discipline changed the discourse of European society. The discipline sociology very much helped to understand the changed social order and tried to find out new ways to solve multiple issues. In fact, there was a need to establish a kind of discipline that understands society in a scientific manner. Therefore, Comte's discovered such discipline known as sociology. Comte stressed much on the positive sociology. The positivism in sociology emphasized more on the scientific methodology. Comte, who is known as the founding father of sociology has defined it as the science of social phenomena. Comte was greatly influenced by the scientific methodology and it was also a challenge before him to give logical justice to the disciplines of the social sciences. The irrational nature of the subject matter was not acceptable to European society at that time. Therefore, the scientific temperament we can easily find in Comte's works in sociology. Initially, Comte's given sociological theories helped to understand the complex nature of European society. Comte's work on religion has focussed more on humanity, love and welfare society. Later on, Durkheim carried forward Comte's positive sociology and gave a rational justice to the discipline sociology. Durkheim was the first social thinker who was a doctorate in sociology. Durkheim emphasized more on the sociological methodology. Karl Marx, Max Weber helped the discipline sociology to grow in Germany. Marx was known for his contribution to conflict sociology. Still, his writings are being taught in universities across the world to understand the conflict perspective. Like Durkheim, Weber also focused on the methodology of social sciences. Weber who is known as the father of interpretive sociology, writings on Economy and Society, Religion and Bureaucracy have given a different shape to the discipline sociology and its boundaries. Spencer, a biologist helped the British scholars to seriously think about the sociological research. Sociology introduced in the London University in the year 1907 under the chairmanship of Leonard Hobhouse, who later became a dominated figure. Later on, Morris Ginsberg helped the discipline to grow in Britain. Then, Italian scholars like Pareto, Mosca, and Michels have made a serious

contribution to the origin and development of sociology as a discipline.

The French, German sociology has been seen more successful in terms of flourishing in academics and research as compared to the Italian sociology. French and German sociology helped in the emergence of the discipline. Later British sociology expanded the thoughts entirely.

Thus, the origin of sociology in the west happened during the 19th century when many social thinkers were looking for solutions to societal disorder due to societal change. The emergence of sociology is a response to those changes. *Second*, the debate between social sciences and sciences also makes sociology more special due to its subject matter which is scientifically guided. *Third*, sociology is the science of society has been challenged by diverse scholars, but, due to dealing with human thinking and dynamic nature of society, the findings of the conducted sociological study could change over a period of time. Sociology has its own methods and methodology to understand society. *Fourth*, sociology as a discipline expanded throughout Europe during the 19th and 20th century. *Fifth*, social factors also have shaped the discipline boundaries i.e. French sociology gives us hope or a kind of spiritual energy and German sociology teaches us to fight for the injustice. It has entirely focussed on conflict and social change.

6.FINDINGS

This paper has shown that social factors have shaped the sociological discourse in the west. French sociology is not similar to the German sociology. The emergence of sociology in the French was a reaction to the modernity. The political impact of Germany could be easily found in the writings of German sociologists. The study has shown that the Comte's vision of sociology has not been carry forward by the sociological scholars. Comte's sociology was more societal oriented and developmental in character. That could help the discipline grow more rapidly both in academics and research. The study also has pointed out that there is a need for a paradigm shift in the sociological discourse. The contemporary sociology should focus more on

applied research. This paper could be significant for knowledge production.

7.EPILOGUE

This paper entitled, "*The Origins of Sociology as a Discipline: A Critical Discourse Analysis*", looks into the emergence of sociology in the west. It has discussed the contribution made by various social thinkers in the shaping of the discipline sociology. Sociology deals with the study of society in a scientific and systematic manner. It studies human minds, human groups, social relationships, social interactions, social actions, social institutions, etc. The thing which makes sociology unique from other social sciences disciplines are its own subject matter and terminology, scientific temperament and the research methodology. This paper also made a critical discourse on the emergence of sociology as a discipline in the west.

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