

Contributors of Sociological Theory

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In this paper sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and Karl Marx will be examined as well as their contributions to sociology. The founding fathers of sociology and their childhoods, backgrounds, contributions and how those factors impacted them, as well as their discoveries will be examined. The founding fathers had varying ideas on politics, biology, and the economy which all ultimately ended up contributing to the creation of sociology. The ideas and theories Comte, Spencer, and Marx discovered years ago can still be related to today's everyday life and functions. This provides us with the ability to better understand the world in which we live.

Sociological theory is an abstract concept as it is made up of practical applications and is relevant to everyday life concepts. These concepts are known as methodology or analytical ideas that have a framework. This refers to the focus of sociologists and can influence what research is selected to be done. Sociology is social thoughts and processes as well as scientific thinking among and about humans. Sociological theory is to explain what occurred and give meaning to what had been observed (Kundu, 2012). There is a lot to sociological theory, it is not just one sole idea, theory, or person. It is multiple people's ideas, overtime combined and changed to give reason to society, issues, and interactions. Sociology theory is unique from other scientific theories because it takes into consideration all types of subjects instead of just one. It allows for understanding of the social world through interactions and observations rather than just scientific research or scientific theories. Sociological theory also focuses on groups, communities, and cultures as it deals with humans instead of organisms or any other biological creature.

Auguste Comte was born in 1798 in France to a catholic family. This was also the time of the French Revolution and Comte grew up surrounded by political unrest and disruption. At a young age he began to distance himself from the catholic church to become a follower of the

monarchy, a republican, and a non-believer (Allan & Daynes, 2017). Comte's decision to break away from his family's catholic beliefs led to the development of his own beliefs by taking into consideration what was going on around him. Comte took the chaos around him and was influenced to try to better society. He found inspiration among other scientists such as Henri de Saint-Simon and ideas of science, technology, and capitalism which influenced Comte's own ideas and his theory of positivism (Allan & Daynes, 2017). Positivism is the philosophical system that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof. Therefore, rejects metaphysics and theism.

Auguste Comte's ideas were ones of a political nature and background. He saw his ideas as a process that would take time and was continuously evolving in both society and people's minds. He is often referred to as the father of sociology as he wanted to establish a new social science like social physics but ended up coming up with Sociology. Comte's philosophy was based on the conclusion that intellectual discipline progress can only occur to the degree that it is based on facts and experiences. His goal was for scientific methods to be used by sociologists in order for them to gain more knowledge about the social world around them. Using this information they had gathered they would then aim to cure the social chaos by advising people on how life should be lived. Comte felt that outside forces were quickly taking politics place of importance in people's lives. He said the state was being influenced by social and economic laws which took from its original authority. Thus, creating a new economy, positions, and objectives (George, 1979). Comte challenged politics and the political structure to create a new spiritual power.

The second founding father is Herbert Spencer who was born April 27th, 1820, during the British Industrialization. He was born into a British aristocracy family where he was educated at

home in math, natural sciences, history, English and other languages as well. Out of nine kids eight of his siblings died leaving him as an only child who remained weak in his life, suffering from nervous breakdowns, chronic insomnia, “the mischief” in his head, and overall, just never in good health. Spencer, despite the teachings of his father and uncle, never had any formal education but he was known to be associated with scholastic clubs and personal networking. He was not only knowledgeable in one subject but many, which gave him the ability to write about all sorts of topics. This ability led to the development of his theory (Allan & Daynes, 2017).

Later in Spencer’s life he wrote the System of Synthetic Philosophy which brought multiple subjects such as biology, psychology, sociology, and ethics together. He was also known for rejecting many of Comte’s ideas and believing that nature determines everything. While Spencer was one of the top contributors to sociology, he became somewhat overshadowed because his ideas were controversial and criticized. However, because of Spencer’s time at the Derby which helped support his scientific and political activities it is believed that he may have come in contact and was influenced by Erasmus Darwin (Elliott, 2003). He went on to create a theoretical perspective known as functionalism where he saw society as an organism which needed to adapt to survive. He argued that all systems need to take resources from their surroundings and distribute the resources they get throughout the system. His theory was not taken seriously due to lack of theoretical system for natural selection. His evolutionary stance quickly became known as social Darwinism which influenced multiple early evolutionary economists. Because of Herbert Spencer’s contributions and typology there has been a movement from a militaristic society to a more industrialized society.

The last sociologist and founding father that will be examined is the famous Karl Marx. He was born to a Jewish middle-class family in Trier, Germany. He supported the uprisings in

Germany and was expelled from both Germany and France. Marx, much like Comte, was influenced by Henri de Saint-Simon's ideas which led him to think about socialism. Simon and Marx had very similar ideas such as industry and class conflict (Allan & Daynes, 2017). Marx had predicted the global expansion of capitalism as it compelled other nations into capitalism. In a way capitalism creates a world of its own image. Marx learned extensively about economic development laws that were associated with capitalism, and he was concerned with the different types of socio-economic systems (Hoselitz, 1964). While Marx predicted capitalism, he also predicted the fall of capitalism for both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. However, the fall of capitalism has not yet occurred and unlike he predicted the proletariat have a large chance in capitalism and its success. Another important contribution made by Karl Marx to sociology is his theory of Critical Conflict Theory. This theory is designed to take social factors and processes that create conflict in a society, the results as well and explain why they occur. This is not aimed at changing the world or society but is rather used to explain why things happen. His other theory, Critical Theory however, sees these social factors and processes as specific and important. These theorists focus on how inequalities in society impact people, it is aimed at changing society and what occurs within it (Allan & Daynes, 2017). The theories created by Marx are important for us as they help us understand society as well as how to change society.

Throughout history there have been multiple theorists, some having a more lasting impact than others. Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and Karl Marx were examined, and it was clear they all had a variety of ideas, yet all had valuable contributions to sociology. They provided ways to understand and change politics as well as the chaos occurring within society. Others provided theories and ideas in relation to function within society or even conflicts and how to deal with them. All of these ideas are different but theorists gained intellect by similar or the

same scientists. However, all of their contributions helped society in the past and can still be used today. The theories these sociologists developed and built upon further the development of sociology as well as to understand and provide insight on the social world thanks to their hard work and contributions.

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