**Unit Essay 1**

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SOCL 401-01

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January 30, 2025

**For this revision, I had some APA formatting issues, which included page numbers and hanging indents in my references. I revised my first couple of paragraphs relating to question one which was expanding on the contributions of the theorists to make my argument stronger and help the reader get a description of what each contribution is and what they mean. I checked for any spelling and grammatical errors and read it over to see if it flowed nicely.**

Some early figures that helped establish sociology as a scientific discipline were Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, and Karl Marx. Auguste Comte is considered the founder of sociology and helped pave the way for sociologists after him. Comte established social dynamics and social statistics, the Law of Three Stages, and Positivism. Social dynamics are the stable forces in society and how societies create order, while social statics are the changing forces in society and how societies progress. The Law of Three Stages is the different stages societies go through in order to progress. The first stage is the theological stage, which seeks answers for origins and the purpose of being. The next stage is the metaphysical stage, when the human mind uses facts as explanations for things instead of divine forces. The last stage is scientific/positive, which abandons supernatural forces and uses laws, science, and rational thought as the cause of observable phenomena. Lastly, positivism is how the world establishes truth, and this truth must be observed or measured from a mathematical or scientific inference.

Harriet Martineau is another important figure in the establishment of sociology. She sought to create a science of society that would be systematic, grounded in observation, and accessible to general leadership. Her contributions included morals and manners, things and discourse of persons, impartiality, critique, sympathy, domination, and feminism. Morals are collective societal ideas that prescribe behavior, and manners are observable patterns of how people treat one another. Things are objects within a society that embody the common mind or the voice of people, and discourse of persons is the interactions between people that include language use and non-verbal communication. Impartiality, critique, and sympathy are all ways to study morals and manners, and domination is the enforced submission of one’s will to another. Lastly, feminism is the intellectual, consciousness-raising movement based on the idea that women and men should be offered equal opportunities and respect. Even though Martineau has established feminism in sociology, she is not the founder/creator of feminism.

Another figure that helped establish sociology as a scientific discipline is Herbert Spencer. He experienced and observed the same things Martineau did in her time, and he was also influenced by Auguste Comte’s ideas, but would never admit to it. Some key concepts Spencer contributed to sociology are growth, structure, differentiation, militant and industrial societies, functionalism, Social Darwinism, and survival of the fittest. Growth is when a society starts small and progressively increases in size; structure is how societies must change and grow to remain viable, and differentiation is the result of growth and structure, creating subdivisions or differentiated states. It’s also the laying groundwork for functionalism. Militant societies are corporate defensive and offensive, centralized, and value patriotism, loyalty, and obedience, while industrial societies are peaceful and mutual, decentralized, and value independence, respect, and kindness. Spencer’s idea of Social Darwinism argues that certain humans would become more powerful than others because of their race or group. Lastly, survival of the fittest simply means that the beings who are better equipped for survival will survive rather than the beings who aren’t equipped for survival.

Last but not least is Karl Marx. He is also known as the founder of communism and for his criticism of Capitalism. An important part of Marx’s work is how the economy generates an “ideology”, which is “Capitalist society is one where most people, rich or poor, believe all sorts of things that are really just value judgments that relate back to the economic system” (The school of Life, 2014). Karl Marx’s other contributions to sociology include historical materialism and class theory. Historical materialism is a theory about the history of society and how the first historical act of production is the material itself. He goes into the economic base, the economic superstructure, and the two parts of the labor process: productive forces and relations of production. Class theory is the concern of social relations based on who controls the mode of production. His theory states that capitalism creates alienation and how workers are alienated through the production of their own labor and production process, fellow workers, and species-being.

Before knowing what sociological theory is, you must know what theory is. Theory is a system of generalized statements or propositions about phenomena (Edles & Appelrouth, 2015). Sociological theories are explanations about an aspect of society and what we are interested in (Sternheimer, 2020). These theories are not developed in isolation. They are a conceptual scheme that makes sense of experiences and explains observable facts informed by personal experiences, previous theories, eras in which a person lives, and new data that can extend, modify, or refute old theories. Sociological theories also provide a way to explain how people might have been under social circumstances, describe why things have happened/why people have behaved a certain way, and provide a framework to incite social change. One feature of sociological change is that it attempts to make statements about how and why the social world is the way it is. Another feature is that it focuses on socially occurring phenomena at three levels: micro, meso, and macro. Micro-level phenomena include interactions between individuals and serve the purpose of meaning-making. Meso-level phenomena include medium-sized components of society that include groups of people, organizations, communities in societies, and interactions with people in those groups. Lastly, macro-level phenomena include society as a whole, major institutions, and societal, economic, and political forces that create a unique context for societal behavior. Overall, sociological theories provide a paradigm in which to explain broad phenomena. It is used as a way to understand and make sense of social reality and provides a cognitive framework for thinking.

Sociology theory is very unique and different from other scientific theories. The tradition and practice of sociological theory are fundamentally rooted in the understanding of the human condition, answering questions about the human condition, and proposing ways to alleviate the human condition for those struggling. In scientific theory, the goals are to explain, predict, and control empirical phenomena (Allan & Daynes, 2017). Sociological theory is different because individuals cannot control the phenomena that are happening. After all, humans are unpredictable. Since these theories aren’t intended to be predictable, they evaluate some aspects of society and critically challenge how we’ve come to understand society. Sociologists only want to know the inner workings of society and what the future holds. Sociological theories fail to conform to the ideas of science or philosophy and don’t comply with the “ideal” practices of “hard” sciences like physics and chemistry (Edles & Appelrouth, 2015). It doesn’t conform to these studies because it explains social phenomena, societal structures, and the relationships between individuals and other groups of society. Other sciences like physics and chemistry focus on physical and biological processes that happen within humans and in nature (National University, 2021). Another difference is their methods of research. Sociology uses observation as one of its main forms of research methods, while other sciences may use mostly quantitative data. Overall, sociological theories emphasize how society is interconnected and think about society as a whole instead of focusing on different smaller components. These theories explore society, how and why societies change, and how the history of sociology can relate to the present day.

**References**

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